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DOI:

[10.1353/ajp.2010.0011](https://doi.org/10.1353/ajp.2010.0011)

Document Version

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Citation for published version (APA):

Squire, M. (2010). Making Myron's cow moo? Ecphrastic epigram and the poetics of simulation. *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PHILOLOGY*, 131(4), 589-634. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ajp.2010.0011>

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MAKING MYRON'S COW MOO? ECPHRASTIC EPIGRAM AND THE POETICS OF SIMULATION

MICHAEL SQUIRE



Abstract. Myron's bronze sculpture of a cow proved an extraordinarily popular subject for Greek and Latin epigram over an exceptionally long time-span (*Palatine Anthology* 9.713–42, 793–98, Posidippus 66 A–B, Ausonius 63–71, *Epigrammata Bobiensia* 10–13). But why the fascination? This article reads the image as an icon for the poetic simulations of ecphrastic epigram. First, it emphasises the ambivalence with which the poems celebrates the statue's verisimilitude: Myron's bronze cow at once convinces and fails to convince. Second, it relates the mimetic make-believe of the statue to the illusionism of literary epigram, especially epigrams on artworks: the virtually real cow figures the various pretences of the genre, fluctuating between material image, epigraphic inscription, and anthologised text. The more poems added to the series, the more pressing the replicative agenda: Myron's reproduction of a cow keeps on reproducing itself, in ever more playful (and playfully contrived) ways.

About 400 BC, a Greek sculptor named Myron made a bronze cast of a cow. Cicero claims to have seen the statue in Athens, and in the seventh century Procopius saw it in Rome. Thus, for over a thousand years the work had attracted attention. Although considerable information concerning this statue has come down to us, none of it is much help in forming a clear idea [*deutliche Vorstellung*] of the original. Even more surprising is the fact that some thirty-six epigrams on the subject are not more useful in this respect, and are only worthy of note as examples of the kind of confusion which poetically inclined viewers can cause [*als Verirrungen poetisierender Kunstbeschauer*]. These epigrams are monotonous and dull [*eintönig*] and neither descriptive nor informative: for this reason they tend to be more misleading than helpful when used as a basis for visualising and defining the lost bronze. The named and unnamed authors seemingly tried to outdo each other in producing rhythmic pleasantries rather than address themselves seriously to the work itself. The best they can say is that they feel compelled to extol the statue's magnificent realism [*große Natürlichkeit*]. But such praise by dilettantes is highly suspect [*ein solches Dilettantenlob ist aber höchst verdächtig*].

(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *On Myron's Cow*¹)

¹ Quoted from Goethe 1818, 2.9–10, trans. as Goethe 1986, 23–24 (adapted). An abbreviated version of Goethe's essay appears in Grumach 1949, 2.515–19, together with subsequent references to the statue. All translations of Greek and Latin texts are my own.

THE THIRTY-SIX GREEK EPIGRAMS ON MYRON'S BRONZE SCULPTURE OF A COW, collected in two separate places within the ninth book of the *Palatine Anthology* (9.713–42, 793–98), have met with little favour. For Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who composed an essay on the lost statue in 1812, these “empty rhetorical flourishes” (*leere rednerische Floskeln*) were interesting only in so far as they testified to an otherwise lost masterpiece of Greek art—the romantic “naiveté of the concept,” as Goethe puts it, whereby the “high-minded artist . . . knew how to perceive the essence of nature and to express it” (1986, 24, 29).² Writing some thirty-five years earlier, Johann Gottfried Herder (like Johann Joachim Winckelmann before him) omitted any reference to the epigrams themselves, instead responding to Friedrich Riedel's question of whether “Myron's cow would please us more if it were covered in hair.”³ “Dull,” “misleading,” “suspect”: whatever the potential aesthetic interest of Myron's actual sculpture (long since lost), the Enlightened German tradition promptly wrote off the epigrams that celebrated it in antiquity.⁴

Subsequent aesthetes and literary critics have followed suit. In his 1862 Latin monograph on “the epigrams of the *Greek Anthology* that look to the arts,” Otto Benndorf dismissed these epigrammatic “trifles” as “inept,” composed in isolation from the original statue.⁵ The same rhetoric pervades A. S. F. Gow and Denys Page's landmark commentary on Hellenistic epigram, published some one-hundred years later, which variously characterised them as “commonplace and foolish,” “a somewhat tedious competition in thinking of a new way to say that it was a very lifelike

²On Goethe's romantic reconstruction of the statue and its significance, see Speyer 1975, 176–79; more generally on Goethe's ideals of art, see the excellent catalogue of the 1994 exhibition at Frankfurt and Weimar (Schulze 1994).

³For an English translation, see Herder 2002, 54 (originally published in 1778, and responding to Riedel 1767, 142): “Myron's cow would then look *too much* like a cow. A cow that is too like a cow? That is, a cow but too much cow? I answer straightaway that as far as art is concerned it would no longer be a cow but a stuffed pelt of hair. Close your eyes and feel it: you will no longer encounter a form, let alone a beautiful form, a beautiful shape. Even if a herdsman wished to drive away Myron's iron cow, the cow would not make any impression either on the herdsman or on the artist, for it is “too like a cow and yet not a cow,” that is to say, a phantom.” For Winckelmann's mention of the sculpture, in the context of Greek images of animals, see Winckelmann 2006, 214 (originally published in 1764).

⁴Compare Edward Gibbon's earlier dismissal of the “false wit” of the poems (Gibbon 1996, 2.544, n. 68—originally published in 1788).

⁵See Benndorf 1862, 72–73, labelling them *ineptiis, nugis, cantilenam*. Benndorf's agenda was to differentiate between epigrams inscribed on “genuine” statues (as recorded in other literary sources), and those which merely functioned as artificial “poetic games” (*lusus poetici*, 2).

representation of a cow.”⁶ The poems have fared little better among art historians: like classical philologists before them, classical archaeologists have generally heeded Goethe's recommendation to “disregard all the misleading assumptions the epigrams make about the cow, and try to focus on the actual sculpture.”⁷ Some, like Alexander Stuart Murray, writing in 1880, have lamented that “it is impossible to explain the quantity and extravagance of the praise awarded to [Myron's] bronze figure of a cow”;⁸ others—most recently Antonio Corso (1994)—have tended to reduce the poems to apposite footnotes regarding the iconography, appearance, and function of the original statue.⁹ Few mince their words in evaluating poetic competence: the epigrams, as Andrew Stewart recently concludes, are “mostly vacuous in the extreme” (1990, 1.257).

This article takes a different tack. Encouraged by the recent explosion of interest in Hellenistic epigrams on artworks¹⁰—itself fuelled, at least in part, by the publication in 2001 of the newly discovered Milan Posidippus (complete with its own epigram on Myron's cow)¹¹—I propose to explore the Myron's cow poems in their own literary terms. The article

⁶Gow and Page 1965, 2.64, ad *AP* 9.720 (Antipater of Sidon 36); cf. Gow and Page 1965, 2.387, on the “long and tedious series of couplets on this theme” (ad *AP* 9.719, Leonidas of Tarentum 88); Gow and Page 1968, 86: “the pastime of inventing new ways of saying that the *Cow* was very lifelike enjoyed a vogue much longer than it deserved” (ad *AP* 9.728, Antipater of Thessalonica 84). The dismissal is fleetingly challenged by Goldhill 1994, 306, n. 14, who rightly comments that Gow and Page “do not consider the basic question *why* there are so many poems on this subject in this form.” Zanker 1987, 45, on the other hand, seems to concur with Gow and Page's assessment.

⁷Goethe 1986, 26. Cf. Williams 2004, 9–10, declaring of the Myron's cow epigrams that “though we quickly tire of their formulaic quality, we must recognize that they say as much about the experience of art as most people needed to say.”

⁸Murray 1880, 2.225–26. Ever practically minded, Murray could only suppose that Myron was inspired by the pedigree of the cow—that it must have “represented the perfection of breed” and “the refinement of species.”

⁹In the quest to recover the historical reality of the sculpture, the epigrams are consequently treated as straightforward stepping-stones—the textual building-blocks on which to found the objective project of archaeological reconstruction: cf., e.g., Schwarz 1971, 24–27; Mattusch 1988, 144–45; 2008, 428–29.

¹⁰The following contributions are among the most important: Goldhill 1994; Rossi 2001, esp. 15–27; Gutzwiller 2002a; 2004; Meyer 2005; Männlein-Robert 2007a; 2007b; Prioux 2007; 2008; Tueller 2008, esp. 141–65. The essays collected in Bing and Bruss 2007b testify to the flourishing field of research on Hellenistic epigram more generally.

¹¹The bibliography on Posidippus is growing exponentially: in addition to two important English edited volumes (Acosta-Hughes, Kosmetatou, and Baumbach 2004; Gutzwiller 2005), note the excellent discussion of Prioux 2008, 159–252 (with detailed bibliography). On Posidippus' poem on Myron's cow, see below, pp. 598–99.

proceeds in two parts, looking first to the rhetoric of realism in these epigrams, and second, to the poetological significance of that rhetoric within epigram as anthologised entity: Myron's make-believe bronze sculpture of a cow, I argue, provided an iconic talisman for the various fabrications of the newly forged literary genre.

Although criticism has tended to focus on the lifelikeness of Myron's make-believe sculpture (Fuà 1973), the epigrams on Myron's cow stage a much more ambivalent contest about art's verisimilitude. Framing their discussions in terms of Late Classical and Hellenistic theories of visual epistemology and mimetic replication, the poems prove wholly ambivalent: they vacillate between celebrating the authenticity of the statue and drawing attention to its mimetic fictions. Myron's cow is deemed as mendacious as it is compelling; indeed, it is the image's duplicity that epigram judged so worthy of epigrammatic duplication.¹² But why the fascination and enduring popularity of the theme? What function did the rhetoric of realistic representation have within the generic context of epigram? And how should we explain the obsession with perpetuating that rhetoric—with adding more and more poems to this “replica series”—reproducing it in ever new (and indeed more formulaic) ways?¹³

An answer, I suggest, lies in the virtual reality of ecphrasis,¹⁴ and in the virtual reality of ecphrastic epigram in particular.¹⁵ Questions about

¹² In this capacity, my analysis builds upon several more promising studies of the Myron's cow epigrams that have appeared over the last thirty-five years: Speyer 1975; Laurens 1989, 83–85; Lausberg 1982, 223–37; Gutzwiller 1998, 245–50; Goldhill 2007, 15–19; Männlein-Robert 2007a, 265–69; 2007b, 83–103. Compare also the discussion in Gross 1992, 139–46, noting how Myron's sculptural “object wins life from the poetic text, even as the text seeks to win a different life in turn from the object, as well as from the broader play of each text against the others” (141).

¹³ For an excellent introduction to ideologies of replication in Graeco-Roman antiquity, as explored through visual culture, see the essays in Trimble and Elsner 2006.

¹⁴ I have attempted a review of bibliography on ecphrasis (in both classical and broader comparative literary perspective) in Squire 2009, 139–46. My own thinking very much aligns with Elsner 2002, 2–3 (discussing epigram specifically on 12–13), namely, that “Graeco-Roman writers and readers would have recognised the description of art as a paradigmatic example of ekphrasis with a significance relatively close to modern usage.”

¹⁵ It is perhaps necessary here to clarify the “ecphrastic epigram” of my title (defended at greater length in Squire forthcoming). Many scholars have rallied against such generic categorisation, but I find their arguments largely unpersuasive. Graham Zanker has led the crusade to abandon the term, at least in association with pre-Byzantine epigram: “like the current use of the word ‘ekphrasis’ itself, the name of the category is a modern invention”; “these poems were very rarely intended to give a vivid description . . . They were poems *about* statues, paintings and gems” (Zanker 2003, 61, 62, restated in 2004, 184–85, n. 26;

this crafted artwork translate into questions about the artifice of the epigrams that commemorate it: in a receding series of replications—cow turned sculpture, sculpture turned inscribed epigram, inscribed epigram turned anthologised representation, itself epigrammatically represented *ad infinitum*—the poems interrogate the very poetics of “original” and “copy.” On the one hand, Myron’s mimetic make-believe serves as a figurative metaphor for the ecphrastic project of replicating images in words; on the other, Myron’s mimesis, at once persuasive and delusive, mimics the fictitious conceit of epigram, which feigns physical attachment to the statue evoked despite being herded within the literary anthology. As such, the epigrams draw knowing attention to their multiple levels of simulation: the fictions of literary epigram, oscillating between monumental inscription and collectible anthologised entity, find an analogy in the virtual reality of this bronze cow. The more epigrams added to the sequence, the more pressing the replicative agenda: with every new poem, it becomes harder to differentiate model from reproduction. The series of epigrammatic imitations—themselves purporting to imitate an artistic imitation in words—keeps on reproducing itself.

further discussions in Lauxtermann 1998, esp. 326–29; Rossi 2001, 15–16; Gutzwiller 2002a, 85, n. 1; 2004, 361–62; Chinn 2005, esp. 248–52; Bravi 2006, 113–31, esp. 115–20; Petrovic 2005, 38–39; Männlein-Robert 2007a, 251–52; 2007b, esp. 37–38). To my mind, a problem lies in the assumption that, in order to qualify as an ecphrasis, a Greek or Latin text had to evoke the formal and physical traits of the object described. There is a danger here in collapsing ecphrasis into an all too simplistic definition of *enargeia*, the philosophical concept with which Greek rhetorical discussions associated the phenomenon of ecphrasis in the *Progymnasmata* (see most recently Webb 2009, 87–106): Zanker variously defines *enargeia* as “literary pictorialism,” “pictorial representation of fine art,” “vivid and precise copy of the subject,” and “a more empiricist particularism in pictorial representation, and one quite close to modern Realism” (Zanker 1981, 39–44; cf. Zanker 1987, 39–42; 2004, 28–30); Zanker consequently argues that “given epigram’s naturally small format, it must limit explicit, detailed description . . . They were very rarely intended to give a visual description of the appearance of the works of art they celebrate” (Zanker 2003, 61, 62). However, *enargeia* is not some “realistic” formal quality, but something wholly more abstract, the quality that brings about the *phantasia* of the imagination. Ancient writers—epigrammatists very much included—were consequently rather more sophisticated in theorising the relationship between what could be seen and what could be read: aware that, no matter how descriptive their evocations, they offered readers a *different* sort of “visualization” from the visual arts, writers actively interrogated what it means to view, and indeed to represent viewing through the verbal medium of language (cf., e.g., Squire 2009, 416–27, and Webb 2009, 187–89, on the complex ontological games of Philostratus the Elder’s *Imagines*).

I. MYRON'S COW: HANKERING AFTER A HEIFER

Let me begin with some preliminaries about Myron's statue itself. What we know about this late fifth-century bronze sculpture is almost entirely dependent upon the testimonia of ancient literary sources.¹⁶ Among the most detailed is the following assessment by Pliny the Elder, written some five centuries after Myron's death (*HN* 34.57–58):

Myronem Eleutheris natum, Hageladae et ipsum discipulum, bucula maxime nobilitavit celebratis uersibus laudata, quando alieno plerique ingenio magis quam suo commendantur . . . primus hic multiplicasse ueritatem uidetur, numerosior in arte quam Polyclitus et in symmetria diligentior, et ipse tamen corporum tenus curiosus animi sensus non expressisse.

Myron was born at Eleutherae and likewise a pupil of Hagelades. He was most renowned for his statue of a cow, praised in some famous poems—for many people owe their reputation not to their own talent but to someone else's . . . He was apparently the first to extend the representation of reality, and a more talented artist than Polyclitus¹⁷—paying more precise attention to a system of proportional parts. And yet even he, though very attentive so far as representing bodies is concerned, failed to capture a sense of inner animation.

From this reference and others, Corso has attempted to piece together the entire life history of the sculpture and its sculptor: the supposed votive dedication of the bronze statue on the Athenian acropolis c.420–417 B.C.E., its subsequent imitation in bronze and marble copies, and its later removal from Athens to the Temple of Peace at Rome (and ultimately in the fourth century C.E. to the appropriately named Forum Tauri in Constantinople).¹⁸ More than that, Corso sees in Myron's lost statue an iconic riposte to the Protagorean (and indeed Periclean) sentiment that "man is the measure of all things": it is highly significant, he hypothesises, that at the end of his career, and during the depths of the Peloponnesian

¹⁶These are collected in Overbeck 1868, 103–7, nos. 550–91 (see also Waltz and Soury 1974, 146–47, n. 3). There is no evidence for the claim that the sculpture was a "fourth-century work" (Zanker 1987, 44).

¹⁷The phrase *numerosior in arte* has attracted quite some controversy: is there a suggestion of quantity of output as well as quality of style? For a concise review, see Pollitt 1974, 409–15; cf. also below, p. 621.

¹⁸See Corso 1994, 50–54 (date), 54–56 (location), 67–77 (copies), 78–80 (removal to Rome), 80–81 (removal to Constantinople); cf. Corso 2004, 2.34–39, and Männlein-Robert 2007b, 85–87.

Wars, Myron chose to abandon the human form and focus instead on the natural world.¹⁹

But what for our purposes is most striking about this passage from the *Natural History* is Pliny's immediate association of Myron's statue with the renowned poems that praise it (*celebratis uersibus laudata*): by the first century C.E., the epigrams on Myron's cow were evidently at least as famous as the statue itself—hence Pliny's sententious aside about the iniquities of perceived *ingenium*.²⁰ This popularity is very much reflected in the epigrams preserved in the so-called “Greek Anthology.” As we have said, there are thirty-six epigrams that survive on Myron's cow in the ninth book of the *Palatine Anthology* (9.713–42, 793–98),²¹ in addition to the newly discovered four-line poem by Posidippus of Pella (66 A–B); with the exception of the final five poems of the first sequence (AP 9.738–42), all the *Palatine Anthology* epigrams are single elegiac couplets.²²

Quite how many of these poems would have been known to Pliny is impossible to determine. The *Palatine Anthology* is a much later collection of epigrams, collected by an unknown editor c. 940 C.E.: the immediate source seems to have been Cephalas of Constantinople's anthology earlier in the same century, from which the *Planudean Anthology* is also said to derive.²³ Although a veritable hotchpotch, the *Palatine Anthology*

¹⁹ See Corso 2004, 34–35: “This approach is typical for someone who does not accept the idea of humans as the measure of everything, characterizing the Periclean culture and the sophistic one.” The original history of the statue is accordingly deemed to explain its Hellenistic popularity: not only does the statue stem from the late fifth century, and from Athens, it is “un'avvisaglia delle rappresentazioni idilliche, in voga nella temperie ellenistica” (Corso 1994, 78). Corso's reasoning here owes something to Goethe's romantic response some two centuries earlier.

²⁰ Pliny's complaint develops a standard literary trope about the power (and injustice) of poetic *kleos*: the trope stretches back at least as far as Pindar's claim about Odysseus, who owes his fame to Homer (*Nem.* 7.20–23). Compare Pliny's comments about Apelles' painting of Aphrodite Anadyomene, likewise celebrated in “Greek verses” (*HN* 35.91–92, *uersibus Graecis tali opere dum laudatur*); in the case of the Aphrodite Anadyomene painting, Pliny notes how the epigrams outlived even the painting itself (further discussion in Squire 2010a, 148–52).

²¹ Some editions count thirty-seven poems in total, inserting as AP 9.721A a distich only in fact found in *Sylloge S* (see, e.g., Beckby 1958, 807; Waltz and Soury 1974, 148, n. 2). In what follows, I mostly refer to the text of the Budé edition (Waltz and Soury 1974), while labelling that additional epigram AP 9.721A.

²² AP 9.742 alone is composed in iambic trimeters rather than elegiac couplets.

²³ The most important discussion of derivation is Cameron 1993 (esp. 82–83 on the evidence of the Myron's cow epigrams). For a useful guide to subsequent bibliography, see Bing and Bruss 2007a, 17–26. Argentieri 2007 now provides a short survey of scholarship on both Meleager's *Garland* and Philip's subsequent, Julio-Claudian imitation.

preserves numerous Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic epigrams, including occasional series that perhaps derive from the much earlier epigrammatic collections of Meleager and Philip.²⁴ There can be little doubt that some of the poems on Myron's cow preserved in the *Palatine Anthology* featured in earlier Hellenistic and Imperial collections of epigrams.²⁵ And Myron's sculpture was not the only artwork to receive this sort of epigrammatic afterlife. But no other object can be said to have attracted so extensive and diachronic an archive of epigrams: "it is hard to think of any other work of art," writes Simon Goldhill, "that is treated by such a coherent and extensive body of poetry by different hands."²⁶

Rather than ask what gave rise to these extraordinary poems on Myron's cow, scholars have all too often focused on questions of chronology and prosopography. The legacy of Gow and Page looms large here. In attempting to distinguish the ("good") Hellenistic epigrams in the "Greek Anthology" from ("derivative," "secondary," "inferior") latter-day imitations, Gow and Page tended to care less about what an epigram says than who (is supposed to have) said it. But quite how important authorship proved to ancient readers remains an open question. Of the thirty-six epigrams on Myron's cow preserved in the *Palatine Anthology*, twelve are anonymous; of the remaining twenty-four poems, eight epigrams are ascribed to Julian (the sixth-century Prefect of Egypt),²⁷ six to Antipater,²⁸

²⁴As argued by Gutzwiller in particular, whose overarching argument about the original significance of epigrammatic sequence leans heavily on the Myron's cow poems: see Gutzwiller 1998, 245–50, 322. Gutzwiller reads *AP* 9.719, attributed to Leonidas of Tarentum, as among the earliest poems, to which six surviving poems by Antipater (*AP* 9.720–24, 728) respond: "The arrangement . . . indicates that the sequence displays neither a careless arrangement nor the design of an editor, whether Meleager or another. The most logical explanation for the arrangement is that the *Anthology* has preserved the basic sequence taken over by Meleager from Antipater's poetry book" (250); cf. Lausberg 1982, 223–24, and Prioux 2007, 261.

²⁵Cf. Argentieri 2003, 140–42, maintaining that ten of the surviving poems (plus Posidippus' epigram) stem from Meleager's *Garland*, and two from Philip's later compilation.

²⁶Goldhill 2007, 3. There are comparable sequences of epigrams, of course: on Praxiteles' statue of Aphrodite at Cnidos (*APlan.* 159–70: see Platt 2002 and 2011, chap. 4), Praxiteles' statues of Niobe and Eros (*APlan.* 129–34, 203–6: see, respectively, Gutzwiller 2002a, 107–9 and Männlein-Robert 2007b, 104–20), or Timomachus' painting of Medea (*APlan.* 135–43: see Gutzwiller 2004). But Myron's cow seems to have attracted greater epigrammatic attention than any other ancient artistic subject; as Pliny the Elder testifies, moreover, the statue seems to have been famous for this reason above all others.

²⁷On these epigrams, see Laurens 1989, 83, along with Schulte 1990, 101–9.

²⁸Of the six poems, five are attributed to Antipater of Sidon, whereas one is ascribed to an unspecified "Antipater": Gutzwiller 1998, 249, is probably right to challenge Gow and Page 1965, 2.64, in attributing *AP* 9.728 to Antipater of Thessalonica (although see also Argentieri 2003, 142).

two to Anacreon,²⁹ two to Euenus,³⁰ and one each to Leonidas, Demetrius, Marcus Argentarius, Dioscorides, Philip, and Geminus³¹ (an appendix at the end of this article lists these attributions, along with references to Gow and Page's discussions). Whatever we make of these ascriptions, the various *topoi* for discussing Myron's statue quickly lost their individual authorial associations. When Ausonius rendered different poems into nine new Latin epigrams, he was more interested in their collective effect than in their Greek authorship (63–71).³² Although the four additional Latin poems on Myron's cow in the *Epigrammata Bobiensia* (10–13) do show greater interest in preserving the integrity of the individual Greek poems that they translate,³³ they make no reference to those original Greek authors: for the editor of this collection, active (like Ausonius) in the fourth century C.E., significance evidently lay in the collective content of the poems, not in the individual poets with which each one may have been associated.³⁴

With these issues in mind, I should come clean about my own approach in this article. There obviously was a chronology to the poems on Myron's cow; as Kathryn Gutzwiller (1998, 245–50) has suggested, moreover, questions of authorship do at times prove insightful and important.³⁵ But I am not convinced that we can reconstruct the development of these poems with any certainty or confidence; even if we could, I do not think that this would provide some all-purpose, hermeneutic key. The Myron's cow poems, with their playful blurring of the boundaries between prototype and imitation, very much anticipate my argument: yes, there must have been some "original" poem behind this series of (meta-)poetic

²⁹The attribution is clearly mistaken or fraudulent: as Page 1981, 146, notes, "Myron was born about the time when Anacreon died."

³⁰On the identity of this Euenus, see Argentieri 2003, 141.

³¹Coleman 2006, xli, by contrast, suggests that those poems not attributed to Anacreon, Euenus, Antipater and Julian "are anonymous" (omitting reference to the poems by Leonidas, Dioscorides, Demetrius of Bithynia, Philip of Macedon, Geminus, and Marcus Argentarius).

³²On Ausonius' relation to the poems in the *Greek Anthology*, see Benedetti 1980, 50–56, along with the commentaries of Green 1991, 404–6 (whose edition I follow) and Kay 2001, 198–209; Becker 2003, 5–6, offers a brief but stimulating analysis of one such Myron's cow poem by Ausonius. There are three more poems in Ugoletus' edition of Ausonius, although they are most likely later mediaeval imitations.

³³See Cameron 1993, 82.

³⁴Generally on the *Epigrammata Bobiensia*, see the edition of Munari 1955.

³⁵Gutzwiller 1998, 246, n. 42, argues that the surviving epigrammatic sequence forges some sort of pseudo-chronology of its own: according to this reading, the opening poem (AP 9.713) serves as a sort of make-believe, archaising "original," which the ensuing series of poems then proceeds to elaborate, tease out and explain.

“copies”; but to reconstruct that development over time would be as vain (albeit alluring) as reconstructing Myron’s statue from the texts which describe it. Myron did forge a bronze sculpture of a cow, of course, even though he cannot have anticipated the statue’s extensive epigrammatic afterlife; perhaps he even inscribed an epigram alongside the image, or else came to be attributed with one such poem.³⁶ And yet—and this point is crucial—there is an obvious danger of building our epistemological castles in the sand. Moreover, it is precisely this issue of distinguishing “original” from “copy” with which the epigrams themselves toy.³⁷

The publication in 2001 of Posidippus’ additional poem on Myron’s cow can demonstrate what I mean here.³⁸ Twelve years ago, Gutzwiller (1998, 246) claimed that *AP* 9.719, ascribed to Leonidas of Tarentum, was “possibly the earliest known treatment of the topic.”³⁹ Just four years later, following the discovery of the new Posidippus, Gutzwiller could persuasively speculate that Posid. 66 A–B “is possibly the earliest now known of the long series devoted to this topic” (2002b, 54):⁴⁰

ἔδόκησε τὸ βοίδιον ἄξιον ὀλκῆς
] καὶ τρισεπαργύριον
] χεῖρα, σοφὸν χρέος εἶδ’ ἐπ’ ἀδόξου
 ἀλλ’ ἰδὼν Μύρων ἐπόει.

The little heifer seemed fit for the plough [. . .] and <?> thrice-covered in silver. [. . .] his hand, he unexpectedly saw a clever thing [. . .] but Myron made it.

³⁶ Compare, e.g., *APlan*. 204—an epigram on Praxiteles’ statue of Eros, ascribed to the artist himself.

³⁷ This “search for the original” is deeply engrained in classical philological circles: the scholarly tradition stretches back to the Hellenistic library at Alexandria, but it finds its more immediate roots in the positivism of the Enlightenment. The same philological impulse shaped classical archaeology in the late nineteenth century, not least with Adolf Furtwängler’s rhetoric of *Kopienkritik* and *Meisterforschung*; among archaeologists, though, the epistemological tide is now turning (cf. esp. Marvin 1993 and 1997; of the substantial bibliography, Perry 2005, Marvin 2008, and Junker and Stähli 2008 are among the most recent and important contributions).

³⁸ On Posidippus’ epigram (66A–B = *P. Mil. Vogl.*, inv. 1295, col. X 34–37), see Gutzwiller 2002b, 54; Kosmetatou 2004, 200–202; Williams 2005, 20–21; and Männlein-Robert 2007b, 70–71.

³⁹ On Leonidas’ poem, see below, pp. 603–5.

⁴⁰ Gutzwiller (less persuasively) adds that “the couplet by Leonidas on the subject, which dates to roughly the same time period, just may be a direct response.”

There are clear conceptual bonds between Posidippus' epigram and those that survive independently in the *Palatine Anthology*.⁴¹ At the same time, there can be little doubt that Posidippus was himself responding to a pre-existing epigrammatic tradition: even in the third century B.C.E., Posidippus could pen a poem on Myron's cow that also doctored the theme so as to fit the larger literary stakes of a single-authored epigrammatic anthology.⁴² Now, some might excavate Posidippus' epigram in the hope of uncovering some otherwise lost ur-poem earlier in the fourth century; others might cross positivist fingers in the hope of stumbling across some earlier, pre-Posidippian papyrus in the future. To my mind, though, the "original" Myron's cow epigram to which Posidippus responds was most likely as murky, lost, and even unimportant for Posidippus (together with his readers) as it was for subsequent poets and imitators.

In what follows, I therefore propose a more diachronic reading of the poems composed on Myron's statue. This is not to flatten issues of chronology altogether: there will be several occasions where we draw attention to chronological development—in the late-antique poems of Julian of Egypt, for example. Rather, I mean to emphasise the *longue durée* of this sculpted object as a subject for literary epigram: on the one hand, issues of chronology and authorial attribution (even when believed) are not the only—nor always the most important—variable within the Myron's cow poems; on the other, these issues risk distracting us from the *shared* concerns of the epigrams within the collective confines of the poetic anthology.

⁴¹ Not only is the diminutive form βοίδιον mirrored in *AP* 9.713–16, for example, but the conceit of the ploughing cow is a mainstay of the surviving epigrams (cf. Männlein-Robert 2007b, 71, 84, and below, n. 49); the topos of seeming (ἐδόκησε) is also paralleled in other epigrams (cf. *AP* 9.724, 728), as is the pseudo-epigraphic signature with which the poem ends (ἀλλ' ἂν Μύρων ἐπόει; cf., e.g., *AP* 9.719.1: οὐκ ἔπρασέν με Μύρων); compare also Posidippus' exhortation of this "clever thing" (σοφὸν χρέος) with the clever artist of *AP* 9.795.1, as well as Posidippus' reference to the artist's hand (χεῖρα) with *AP* 9.716.2, 9.726.2 and Auson. 68.4. As I see it, debates about who is imitating whom here have all the sterility of arguments about chickens preceding eggs.

⁴² Most obviously, the theme of verisimilitude in 66 A–B chimes with the programmatic opening of Posidippus' *Andriantopoiika*, concerned with Hecateus' portrait of Philitas (62 A–B); but note too the placing of 66 A–B immediately after an epigram on Lysippus' portrait of Alexander, an image so charismatic, writes Posidippus, that one might forgive the flight of the Persians, just as one must forgive *cattle* that flee before a lion (συγγνώμα βοῦσι λέοντα φυγεῖν, 65.4 A–B = *APlan.* 119, Posidippus 18). On the order of the *Andriantopoiika*, see esp. Männlein-Robert 2007b, 58–81; Prioux 2007, 108–13; 2008, 200–252 (although I remain sceptical of Prioux's supposed *semnotes/leptotes* opposition, and still more so of the respective Callimachean/Posidippian programmes with which this is associated).

II. VIRTUALLY REAL: THE PROMISE AND FAILURE OF MYRON'S MIMESIS

So what, then, do the Myron's cow epigrams actually say? As numerous commentators have pointed out, following the lead of Oscar Fuà (1973, 52–55), the poems offer different characterisations of the lifelikeness of the statue: the cow-image seems animated, or ἔμπνοος—literally possessing the breath of life;⁴³ on looking upon the bronze cow, moreover, one would say that it really *were* alive (ζωά).⁴⁴ Such is the τέχνη of the artist, as four epigrams put it, that the statue appears to outstrip the φύσις of Nature herself: although this explicit distinction between art and nature dominates some of the later surviving epigrams, all of them ascribed to Julian of Egypt,⁴⁵ it clearly stems from a much earlier concern with the τέχνη of the craftsman (τεχνίτης) Myron.⁴⁶ All other conceits derive from this single topos. As Goldhill writes, the poems respond by “offering tropes of verisimilitude.”⁴⁷ The image, it seems, will wander off, join the herd,⁴⁸ plough the field,⁴⁹ suckle a calf,⁵⁰ be mounted by the bull:⁵¹ we have ourselves a crying, talking, sleeping, walking, *living* cow.

Such critical vocabulary relates to a much larger Hellenistic discourse

⁴³ ἔμπνοος: AP 9.793.2; ἔμπνοον: AP 9.715.2, 740.3, 741.4; ἔμπνοον: AP 9.742.4. Cf. *ut spirantem*: Ep. Bob. 10.2.

⁴⁴ ζῶαν: AP 9.795.2; ζῶωσε: AP 9.795.1; ζῶσαν: AP 9.733.2; ζωπόννησεν: AP 9.742.4. Cf. *uiua*: Auson. 66.2; *uiuae*: Auson. 67.3; *uiure*: Auson. 67.3, Ep. Bob. 12.1.

⁴⁵ AP 9.738.1, 738.3, 793.2, 794.2, 798.2. Goldhill 2007, 16–17, interestingly compares the development of a related theme in the Greek novel, especially Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*. On debates about the respective powers of art and nature and of vision and voice in late antiquity, and their cultural, intellectual and theological stakes, Boeder 1996 remains unsurpassed; cf. Maguire 1996, on Byzantine epigram specifically.

⁴⁶ τέχνα: AP 9.721.2, 737.1, 742.4; τέχνας: AP 9.729.2; τέχνα: AP 9.741.3; τεχνίτας: AP 9.740.3. Cf. ἐτεχνάσατο: 9.727.2; *ars*: Ep. Bob. 12.2; *arte*: Auson. 65.1, Ep. Bob. 11.2, 13.2. For the punning language of both artistic and literary “craftsmanship” here, see Squire 2011, chap. 3.

⁴⁷ Goldhill 2007, 16: as Goldhill continues, “the cow looks so real that . . . is the starting point for nearly all of them.” Cf. Speyer 1975, 174: “Die zahlreichen Epigramme auf die Bucola Myronis versuchen in immer neuer Wendung die täuschende Naturähnlichkeit dieses Kunstwerks auszudrücken.” The most methodical analysis of this supposed “systematic development” is Laurens 1989, 83–85; more generally on variation in Hellenistic epigram, Tarán 1979 remains fundamental.

⁴⁸ AP 9.713, 715, 720, 730, 740. Cf. Auson. 63, 71; Ep. Bob. 10.

⁴⁹ AP 9.721A, 729, 740. To this series can now be added Posid. 66 A–B.

⁵⁰ AP 9.721, 722, 730, 733, 735. Cf. Auson. 63.4, 64; Ep. Bob. 12.

⁵¹ AP 9.730, 734. On the associated trope of the lowing cow, see below, pp. 609–14.

about the lifelikeness of the poetically evoked image.⁵² Among the most celebrated examples is Praxinoa's eulogy of the woven tapestries displayed in Alexandria, as described in Theocritus' fifteenth *Idyll* (80–86)—a passage that was perhaps itself lampooned in Herodas' fourth *Mimiamb*.⁵³ But epigrams on other artistic subjects likewise celebrated the virtuoso realism of the images to which they respond, making much of the shared language of literary and artistic criticism.⁵⁴ In doing so, moreover, poets are usually perceived to have followed the lead of Hellenistic art itself, with its attuned interest in realistic over idealistic forms of representation:⁵⁵ as Zanker maintains, the art and literature of Alexandria together developed a distinctively *Hellenistic* theory of pictorial realism.⁵⁶

Most striking about the poems on Myron's statue, however, is their Janus-faced concern with not only the promise of the sculpture to come to life but also its failure to do so.⁵⁷ These poems prove as duplicitous as the statue itself, emphasising at once the reality and the virtuality of Myron's virtually real cow. Irmgard Männlein-Robert has recently drawn attention

⁵² Cf. Laurens 1989, 83: "En effet le thème unique de ces trente-six poèmes est tout à fait conforme à l'esthétique de l'époque: l'art est une parfaite imitation de la nature; il rivalise avec elle et, à la limite, la surpasse"; Männlein-Robert 2007a, 266: "Hellenistic praise of the cow reflects the high value placed during the era on verisimilitude in artistic representation." This is the usual framework in which the Myron's cow poems are introduced: see, e.g., Vitry 1894, 346–56 (with discussion of Myron's cow on 351), Lausberg 1982, esp. 223–24; Burton 1995, 214, n. 10; Gutzwiller 1998, 246; Rossi 2001, 18–19; Zanker 2004, 184–85, n. 26; Tanner 2006, 261–64 (on the rationalized focus of verisimilitude as one "reasonable way of looking at pictures" in the Hellenistic world).

⁵³ For Theocritus and Herodas, as numerous scholars have now shown, the "accuracy" of the art so self-referentially described (τάκριβέα γράμματα, *Id.* 15.81) reflects the acumen of the poet describing it: see esp. Manakidou 1993, 40–50; Goldhill 1994, 216–23; Burton 1995, 93–122 (with detailed discussion of earlier bibliography); Hunter 1996, 116–23; Skinner 2001 (with response in Goldhill 2007, 8–15); Männlein-Robert 2006; 2007b, 261–307; Zanker 2006; DuBois 2007, 47–54.

⁵⁴ One of the best analyses of this aesthetic remains Vitry 1894, 346–56. For an excellent appendix on lifelikeness as a Hellenistic epigrammatic motif, see Manakidou 1993, 257–59, together with the critical discussion in Friedländer 1912, 55–60.

⁵⁵ On the "realism" of Hellenistic art, see, e.g., Webster 1964, 156–76, esp. 158–59; Onians 1979, 38–46; Pollitt 1986, 141–47; Andrae 1998; Kunze 2002, 232–39.

⁵⁶ See Zanker 1987, 39–54, esp. 42–46. Zanker further postulates that "the eye of the poets had actually been trained by the artists of the fourth-century revolution" (46).

⁵⁷ I take the phrase from Wagner 1996, 13: "Ekphrasis, then, has a Janus face: as a form of mimesis, it stages a paradoxical performance, promising to give voice to the allegedly silent image even while attempting to overcome the power of the image by transforming and inscribing it."

to some of the ways in which they do so:⁵⁸ she rightly emphasises how the vast majority of epigrams (in fact twenty-nine of the thirty-six) mention Myron by name, undermining the illusion of this “real” animal by associating it with a master artist;⁵⁹ eleven of the epigrams, moreover, dwell on the medium of the sculpture—the paradox of looking upon a *bronze* cow.⁶⁰ A number of poems draw express attention to such deceitfulness, variously characterising the artist and his work as dishonest, fraudulent, and treacherous;⁶¹ the cow, as Dioscorides puts it, responding to earlier epigrams, is in fact *lifeless* (ἄπνους, *AP* 734.1).⁶² Related is the way in which other poems establish a hierarchy of different types of viewer and, therefore, different levels of deception. The statue might trick a calf (*AP* 9.721, 730, 733, 735; cf. Auson. 63.4, 64; *Ep. Bob.* 12), a bull (*AP* 9.730, 734; cf. Auson. 63.3, 69), a gadfly (*AP* 9.739) or indeed a lion (*AP* 9.797); it might even fool the herdsman (*AP* 9.713, 715, 722, 730, 731, 737, 739, 741, 742; cf. Posidipp. 66A–B; Auson. 63.5–6, 71; *Ep. Bob.* 10).⁶³ But the fact that the poet can detect the illusion, and moreover turn it into the subject of poetry, reflects his privileged viewing position.⁶⁴

This theme of deceit characterises both the earliest and latest

⁵⁸ See Männlein-Robert 2007b, 93–95.

⁵⁹ Cf. Männlein-Robert 2007b, 93: “Allein dadurch wird die betrachtete Kuh als geschaffenes Kunstwerk entlarvt.” Only *AP* 9.721, 721A, 722, 730, 740, 794 and 797 omit reference to the artist (as do Auson. 68–71 and *Ep. Bob.* 12). More generally on the centrality of artistic agency to rationalized Hellenistic concepts of “art,” see Tanner 2006, 205–76, esp. 223–24.

⁶⁰ Männlein-Robert 2007b, 93: “Indem die zuerst in ihrer täuschenden Echtheit beschriebene Kuh als aus Bronze bestehend beschrieben ist, wird die Illusion gebrochen.” For references to the bronze medium, see *AP* 9.716, 717, 727, 728, 736, 737, 739, 741, 742, 795, 796; cf. Auson. 63, 64, 67, 68; *Ep. Bob.* 13.

⁶¹ ἥπαφε: *AP* 9.737.1, 739.1; ἐξαπάτησε: *AP* 9.734.2; ἠπερόπενσε: *AP* 9.739.4; ψευδομένα: *AP* 9.741.2; ἐψεύσατο: *AP* 9.719.1; ψεύσατο: *AP* 9.716.2. Cf. *fallo*: Auson. 63.5; *falsus*: *Ep. Bob.* 10.2; *ficta*: *Ep. Bob.* 11.2; *fictis*: *Ep. Bob.* 12.2. Compare also the use of the verb for seeming (δοκέω) in *AP* 9.724.1, 728.1 and Posid. 66.1 A–B. For a superlative discussion of the theme of deceit in these poems, see Männlein-Robert 2007b, 87–93, along with Lausberg 1982, 231–36, and Laurens 1989, 84.

⁶² On the poem, see esp. Lausberg 1982, 233–34, and compare, e.g., *AP* 9.793.2 and 798.1.

⁶³ Stoic theories of vision provide the backdrop for this playful hierarchy of vision, whereby humans can prove less prone to visual deception than animals: see esp. Tanner 2006, 242–46. For a scintillating cross-cultural analysis of animals as viewers, see Mitchell 1994, 329–44.

⁶⁴ On the Hellenistic poet as *sophos theates*, the classic analysis is Goldhill 1994. On the theme in the specific context of the Myron’s cow poems, see Männlein-Robert 2007a, 269; 2007b, 100–103.

epigrams in the series. Take the *Palatine Anthology*'s final epigram on Myron's cow, attributed to Julian of Egypt (*AP* 9.798):

τλήθι, Μύρων· τέχνη σε βιάζεται· ἄπνοον ἔργον.
ἐκ φύσεως τέχνη· οὐ γὰρ φύσιν εὔρετο τέχνη.

Bear up, Myron: art defeats you. The work is lifeless. Art comes from nature, for art did not invent nature.

It is surely significant that this poem is placed at the end of the series, closing a larger cluster of six poems penned by the same author. As we have already said, the rhetorical pitching of *technē* against *physis* belongs to the particular discourse of late antiquity, and this concern with *physis* seems unique to Julian. But a related topos evidently stretched back at least to the third century B.C.E., as testified by the following epigram, attributed to Leonidas of Tarentum (*AP* 9.719):⁶⁵

οὐκ ἔπλασέν με Μύρων· ἐψεύσατο, βοσκομένην δὲ
ἐξ ἀγέλας ἐλάσας, δῆσε βάσει λιθίνῃ.

Myron did *not* forge me. He lied, driving me from the herd while I was grazing, he fixed me to a stone base.

This was evidently a famous poem, spawning numerous responses by Antipater of Sidon and others.⁶⁶ For our immediate purposes, though, the epigram is most important for the way in which it associates the deceptiveness of Myron's art with that of poetry at large.⁶⁷ Leonidas responds to a series of ideas dominating the fourth- and third-century intellectual agenda. On the one hand, the theme of lying (ἐψεύσατο) takes us to philosophical discussions of pictorial mimesis: Plato's reproach, responding to Gorgias and others, that mimetic representation privileges the material

⁶⁵ For discussion, see esp. Lausberg 1982, 225–26, 228; Goldhill 2007, 16; Männlein-Robert 2007a, 267–68. For the trope of Myron as “lying” artist, compare *AP* 9.716.2 (ψεύσατο) and 741.2 (ψευδομένη).

⁶⁶ On Antipater's poems, and their relationship to Leonidas, see Gutzwiller 1998, 246–50.

⁶⁷ For a much more detailed discussion of the common language of artistic and poetic criticism at play here, see Männlein-Robert 2007b, 87–93: “In den hellenistischen Epigrammen über Myrons Kuh wird dieser alte poetologische Diskurs, der durch Platons Auseinandersetzung mit der Sophistik sowie die Reaktion des Aristoteles auf diesen maßgeblich modifiziert wurde, neu aufgelegt und anhand des Mediums der bildenden Kunst verhandelt” (90).

eidolon over the immaterial *eidos*, thereby enslaving viewers with its illusion, pretence and sorcery.⁶⁸ In Leonidas' poem, the Platonic trope is invoked only to be overturned: where Plato criticises artists for their empty illusion, Myron is here attributed with the *opposite* ruse of going up to a real cow and cheekily claiming it as his own artificial handiwork (hence the allusion to the standard epigraphic formula—"Myron made me"—here so emphatically denied).⁶⁹ On the other hand, Leonidas has simultaneous recourse to a still older poetological theme: the image of the "lying" artist pertains equally to the "lying" poet; it recalls the paradoxical warning, descended from Hesiod,⁷⁰ but particularly resonant in the poetry of Callimachus, against believing all that we read.⁷¹ In this context, too, note how Leonidas' poem at once invokes and inverts the conceit of lying: if *Myron* lied, after all, just look who's talking—can we really trust a *speaking* cow?⁷²

Given this philosophical-cum-literary backdrop, we can be sure that Leonidas' use of the verb πλάσσειν (literally "to fashion," 9.719.1) carried an additional significance besides.⁷³ Compare, for example, the following anonymous poem, which directly responds to Leonidas' epigram and which echoes Leonidas' opening phrase in its pentameter (*AP* 9.726):⁷⁴

ἅ βοῦς ἂ τίκτουσ' ἀπὸ γαστέρος ἔπλασε τὰν βοῦν·
ἂ δὲ Μύρωνος χεῖρ οὐ πλάσεν, ἀλλ' ἔτεκεν.

⁶⁸The bibliography is substantial, but Lodge 1953 remains an excellent guide; I have learned in particular from Keuls 1974; Pollitt 1974, 41–52; Burnyeat 1999, esp. 263–305; and Nightingale 2004.

⁶⁹On the playful nods to epigraphic formulae in the Myron cow epigrams, see below, pp. 614–15.

⁷⁰The locus classicus is Hes. *Th.* 27, on the poet's "many lies" (ψεύδεα πολλά), but Männlein-Robert 2007b, 88, n. 27, compares, e.g., Solon fr. 29 West and *Od.* 19.203: for further discussion, see esp. Rösler 1980, Puelma 1989, and Bowie 1993.

⁷¹Männlein-Robert 2007a, 268, n. 83, compares, e.g., Callim. *Hymn* 1.65, Callim. 31.4 G–P (= *AP* 7.524.4), and Th. *Id.* 7.44.

⁷²I shall return to the theme of voice below (pp. 609–14). Cf. Goldhill 2007, 16: "Here the vertiginous conceit of the poet is that the cow really is real, and therefore she accuses the artist of "lying" and not "fashioning"—or so the lying poet fashions." For the trope of the "lying" poet, in the context of another ecphrastic epigram, compare *APlan.* 151 (trans. as *Ep. Bob.* 45), in which a speaking painting of Dido chastises Vergil's slander (ψεύσατο, v. 10) against her virtue.

⁷³Compare the use of the verb in *AP* 9.718.1, 724.2, 726.2, 733.1, and 736.1, as well as the references to Myron as "fashioner" (πλάστης) in *AP* 9.723.1, 732.2, 734.2 (βουπλάστης), 796.1.

⁷⁴For a good preliminary discussion of the epigram, see Lausberg 1982, 228.

The cow moulded the cow, bringing it forth from its womb. And the hand of Myron did not fashion it, but gave birth to it.

The verb πλάσσειν here serves as a pseudo-technical term for the sculptor's three-dimensional act of "moulding" his material: the joke, of course, is that the cow has *two* parents—hence the conceit that the biological mother is in reality a sculptor (ἀ τίκτουσ' . . . ἔπλασε), while the sculptor in fact proves the biological parent (οὐ πλάσεν, ἀλλ' ἔτεκεν).⁷⁵ But the word also puns on a broader spectrum of meanings. At stake are much larger theories of *phantasia*, indebted to Stoic modes of theorising the imagination: πλάσσειν refers not only to the *physical* fashioning carried out by the sculptor but also, figuratively, to the *metaphorical* moulding of an image (πλάσμα) in the mind's eye of the viewer or reader.⁷⁶ During the late fifth century B.C.E., the verb became particularly associated with impressions that were false, fabricated, or fictitious—with crafted sophistry that bamboozled and hoodwinked its audience but which also misled.⁷⁷ The anonymous epigram exploits this multivalence for playful effect. In doing so, moreover, it offers a sustained reflection on the multivalence of Myron's statue.

The epigrams on Myron's cow flirt not only with the limits of mimesis but also with associated ideas about the science of seeing. This sheds light on the poems' particular concern with the soul (ψυχή) of Myron's cow.⁷⁸ In some ways, such references form the logical culmination of the statue's rhetorical presentation as a "living" (ζώος) and "breathing" (ἐμπνοος) being, returning to the standard terminology of Hellenistic ecphrastic epigram,

⁷⁵ Cf. *LSJ* s.v. I, citing, e.g., Hes. *Op.* 70, on the "moulding" of Pandora from clay.

⁷⁶ Cf. *LSJ* s.v. III, citing, e.g., Pl. *Phdr.* 246c. For other references, see Männlein-Robert 2007b, 90, n. 41. This associated meaning underpins Euenus' joke whereby Myron fashions not the cow itself, but rather its image (ταύτας δ' εἰκόν' ἀνεπλασάμην, *AP* 9.718.2). On Stoic theories of *phantasia*, and their relevance to ecphrastic epigram, see Squire forthcoming; Rispoli 1985 remains a solid introduction to the philosophical background, together with Bartsch 2007 and Webb 2009, 107–30. As I argue elsewhere (Squire 2011, chap. 7), these theories took on a greater life beyond the third century B.C.E., and in all manner of ecphrastic contexts: compare, e.g., a scholion on *Il.* 18.476–77, which declares of the Homeric description of Achilles' shield that the poet "himself divinely sculpted [διέπλασεν] the sculptor [τὸν πλάστην] Hephaestus, wheeling him out as if onto a stage, and revealing to us his workshop in full view," δαιμονίως τὸν πλάστην αὐτὸς διέπλασεν, ὥσπερ ἐπὶ σκηνῆς ἐκκυκλήσας καὶ δείξας ἡμῖν ἐν φανερῷ τὸ ἐργαστήριον (Erbse 1969–1988, 4.526).

⁷⁷ Cf. *LSJ* s.v. V, and for full discussion see Puglisi 1985. On the multiple meanings at work here, see Männlein-Robert 2007b, 90–92.

⁷⁸ Cf. ψυχήν: *A.* 9.717.2, 736.2; ψυχάν: *AP* 9.737.2. Cf. *animam*: *Auson.* 68.2; *Ep. Bob.* 13.2; *animas*: *Ep. Bob.* 11.2; *animata*: *Auson.* 68.3.

whereby images are praised for their “ensouled” (ἐμψυχος) quality.⁷⁹ But in debating whether—and indeed how—the make-believe cow has a soul, these epigrams also allude to ontological debates about *what* images are; in the words of Agnes Rouveret, these debates “traverse in different ways the entire history of classical antiquity.”⁸⁰ The locus classicus, as Rouveret explains, is the purported conversation between Socrates and Parrhasius recorded by Xenophon (*Mem.* 3.10).⁸¹ Interrogating Parrhasius about the “usefulness” of his craft, Socrates asks him whether painting represents things that are actually seen (γραφική ἐστὶν εἰκασία τῶν ὁρωμένων), or rather imitates different figurative forms through its use of colour (σώματα διὰ τῶν χρωμάτων ἀπεικάζοντες ἐκμιεῖσθε). After establishing that artists must combine the physical features of numerous models to replicate the appearance of beauty (οὕτως ὅλα τὰ σώματα καλὰ ποιεῖτε φαίνεσθαι), Socrates leads the artist to make a critical distinction between material representations and their immaterial referents (3.10.3):

τί γάρ; ἔφη, τὸ πιθανώτατον καὶ ἥδιστον καὶ φιλικώτατον καὶ ποθεινώτατον καὶ ἐρασμιώτατον ἀπομιεῖσθε τῆς ψυχῆς ἥθος; ἢ οὐδὲ μιμητὸν ἐστὶ τοῦτο; πῶς γὰρ ἄν, ἔφη, μιμητὸν εἶη, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὃ μήτε συμμετρίαν μήτε χρῶμα μήτε ὦν σὺ εἶπας ἄρτι μηδὲν ἔχει μηδὲ ὅλως ὁρατὸν ἐστίν;

“Well now,” said Socrates, “do you also replicate the character of the soul—that character which is the most captivating, the most delightful, the most familiar, the most fascinating and the most desirable? Or is this impossible to replicate?” “Oh no, Socrates,” replied Parrhasius, “for how could one replicate something which has neither shape nor colour nor any of the other qualities you just mentioned—something which we are not even wholly able to *see*?”

⁷⁹The topos is by no means unique to the Myron’s cow poems (see Squire forthcoming): perhaps most relevant is Leonidas of Tarentum’s playful claim that Apelles’ picture of Aphrodite Anadyomene is “not painted/written, but ensouled” (οὐ γραπτόν, ἀλλ’ ἐμψυχον, *APlan.* 182.4; cf., e.g., *AP* 9.774.1, ἐνεψύχωσε; 12.56.3, ἐμψυχον; 12.57.3, ἐμψυχα; *APlan.* 97.3, ἐμψυχον; *APlan.* 110.6, ἐμψύχῳ; 159.1, ἐψύχωσε; 182.4, ἐμψυχον; 266.7, ἐμψυχον); compare also Posidippus’ programmatic opening description of a statue of Philitas (ἐμψυχ)ος, 63.8 A–B), or the (un)critical responses to artworks staged in Theoc. *Id.* 15.83 (ἐμψυχ’) and Her. *Mim.* 4.29 (ψύξειν). We find the same theme subsequently referenced in Nicolaus’ late antique *Progymnasmata*: if an ecphrasis of a bronze statue proceeds from the head to the parts, writes Nicolaus in the fifth century C.E., the *logos* becomes “ensouled” throughout (οὕτω γὰρ πανταχόθεν ἐμψυχος ὁ λόγος γίνεται: Felten 1913, 69).

⁸⁰Rouveret 1989, 15 (my trans.).

⁸¹On the passage, see Rouveret 1989, 14–15; Goldhill 1998, esp. 207–10; Steiner 2001, 33–35.

Painters might replicate the image of things seen, the artist confides, but not even a virtuoso master like Parrhasius could render visible the invisible character of the soul: Parrhasius must make do with the imitation of *external* forms.

The dualistic distinction between “inside” and “outside”—epitomised in this passage of Xenophon, but in fact fundamental to a much larger post-Socratic philosophical tradition—helps to contextualise other tropes in Myron’s cow poems. It informs the distinction made by an epigram attributed to Philip, for example, between the cow’s reality and her realistic external appearance (ὄψιν ἔμπνοον, *AP* 9.742.4),⁸² as well as Julian of Egypt’s later contrast between seeing and touching Myron’s statue (δερμομένοις . . . ἐφαπτομένοις, *AP* 9.738.3–4).⁸³ An epigram ascribed to Euenus develops the theme still more overtly (*AP* 9.717):⁸⁴

ἢ τὸ δέρας χάλκειον ὅλον βοῖ τᾶδ’ ἐπείκειται
ἔκτοθεν, ἢ ψυχὴν ἔνδον ὁ χαλκὸς ἔχει.

Either the whole skin of bronze is laid on top of this cow from without, or the bronze has a soul within.

While toying with an ecphrastic epigrammatic concern with representing the depicted subject “whole” or “complete” (ὅλον)—a *topos* which stretches back to Erinna’s famous poem on a picture of Agatharchis (*AP* 6.352.3–4)⁸⁵—Euenus distinguishes between the external form of the statue and its internal truth: for all its realistic appearance (epitomised by the paradoxical suggestion of the cow’s “bronze skin”), we cannot see what is *inside* the sculpture. The cow, as another anonymous epigram puts it,

⁸² Gow and Page 1968, 2.371, challenge the ascription to Philip on the grounds of a prosodic anomaly in v.4 (the short epsilon before the *zeta*: “Style and metre are characteristic of Philip, and we should have accepted Pl’s ascription . . . if his authorship were not almost if not quite ruled out by the scansion”).

⁸³ For an excellent overview of this distinction in Archaic and Classical thought, see Steiner 2001, 79–134.

⁸⁴ For discussion, see Lausberg 1982, 228. Gow and Page 1968, 2.294, cantankerously describe the poem as “one of the most futile of its kind.” But the epigram was evidently deemed worthy of Latin translation in antiquity (as testified by *Ep. Bob.* 13), as well as further epigrammatic imitation (e.g., *APlan.* 246).

⁸⁵ ταῦταν γοῦν ἐτύμως τὰν παρθένον ὅστις ἔγραψεν / αἱ καὶδὲν ποτέθηκ’, ἥς κ’ Ἀγαθαρχίς ὅλα (“If the person who so accurately sketched this girl had only added her voice as well, you would be Agatharchis complete”): on the poem, see esp. Gutzwiller 2002a, 88–91, and Männlein-Robert 2007b, 38–43 (with full bibliography); compare also *APlan.* 120.1, on Lysippus modeling the daring “whole form” (ὅλαν μορφάν) of Alexander the Great.

has no internal organs (σπλάγχνα . . . ἔνδον, *AP* 9.727.2). So it is, according to yet another variant, that a real-life calf approaches the pretend cow but tugs in vain at her bronze udders “believing that the bronze has milk within” (καὶ γάλα πιστεύων χαλκὸν ἔσωθεν ἔχειν, *AP* 9.735.2); if only, as Ausonius translates the theme, God had forged the cow within as Myron had forged it without (*exteriore Myron, interiore deus*, Auson. 64.4).⁸⁶ It is revealing that, when Pliny the Elder comes to epitomise Myron’s sculptural accomplishments, he focuses on precisely this trope, drawing attention to Myron’s shortcomings as well as to his achievements: for all his careful attention to exterior bodily form (*corporum tenus curiosus*), as Pliny puts it, Myron did not outwardly express the sense of inner spirit (*animi sensus non expressisse*, *HN* 34.58).

III. TRUTH, LIES AND EPIGRAM: THE METAPOETICS OF MAKE-BELIEVE

This is an inevitably brief survey. But it is sufficient, I hope, to establish two overriding points: first, that the poems concern themselves with both the promise and failure of Myron’s artistic reproduction of a real cow; and second, that they do so in the terms of philosophical discussions about the aesthetics of mimesis and the subjectivity of vision.⁸⁷ We might add that any ancient reader acquainted with the history of Greek sculpture would have been all the more struck by the particular choice of sculpted illusionistic icon. Poets evidently knew their art history and expected their readers to do the same: even in the third century, Posidippus’ *Andriantopoiika* assumes an audience that was sensitive to different personal sculpted styles—not only those of Myron (mentioned twice) but also Lysippus, Hecataeus, Cresilas, Myron, Theodorus, and Chares.⁸⁸ In the context of the poems on Myron’s fifth-century statue, then, one

⁸⁶Cf. *AP* 9.721, trans. as *Ep. Bob.* 12; more generally on the topos, see Lausberg 1982, 231–32.

⁸⁷I would therefore take issue with the claim that the poems are “purely literary texts,” possessing “scant art historical value” (Männlein-Robert 2007a, 268, 266): although the epigrams of course offer no textual blue-print for the physical appearance of the statue, they negotiate what it means to view, performing the act of looking, all the while representing it in a series of fictional verbal accounts; they raise questions, in other words, about the epistemology of vision—questions by no means removed from the history of artistic production itself. In fact Männlein-Robert expresses the point elsewhere (2007b, 84): “Das Kunstwerk dient dabei lediglich als Stimulus zur Reflexion darüber, *wie* man Kunst sehen soll.”

⁸⁸For an excellent discussion, see Prioux 2007, 109–13.

cannot help but wonder: might there not have been more realistic images for the poets to milk?⁸⁹

Epigrammatists were certainly interested in the authenticity and fantasy of Myron's make-believe. But in the remainder of this article, I want to pose the question, why? What was it about this trope of virtual reality, endlessly developed and varied, that so appealed to the poets. And how do we explain the endurance of the theme late into late antiquity? My suggestion is that the illusionistic pretence of this sculpted image mirrors the persuasive (or otherwise) pretences of epigram as literary genre. By probing the mimetic limits of Myron's artistic representation, these epigrams interrogate their own status as poetic simulations. The virtual reality of the bronze cow, in short, becomes a metapoetic icon for the virtual reality of the epigrams that celebrate it: the credibility (or otherwise) of the cow serves as an internal metaphor for the credibility of a genre—the various fictions that epigrams stage, fluctuating between a range of different ontological registers.

This is a complex argument. Let me begin by drawing attention to the self-referentiality of these poems as verbal responses to a visual stimulus. The sight of the bronze cow becomes a site for articulating a verbal rejoinder to the image—a rejoinder, moreover, that is sometimes itself cited within the direct speech of the poem.⁹⁰ As a result, the question of the image's credibility turns on the credibility of its voice: whether or not this cow is sufficiently lifelike to address the reader-viewer in spoken words.⁹¹ This topos of the talking image goes back to Simonides' well-known dictum that “a picture is a silent poem, a poem is a speaking picture.”⁹² Plutarch, who preserves the Simonidean saying, elsewhere

⁸⁹ Cf. Ridgway 1970, 86 (although dating the statue earlier than, e.g., Corso 1994): “Epigrams seem to bestow the greatest praise to Myron's cow as an example of superb naturalism. This rendering would be hardly in keeping with the style of the Severe period, and it is therefore logical to suspect that the writers were more interested in making florid poetry than in describing accurately.” The ancient sources on the stylistic aesthetics of Myron's art are collected in Overbeck 1868, 108–9, nos. 598–610.

⁹⁰ As in Myron's purported verbal response (ἐρεῖ) upon seeing the statue in *AP* 9.718, or our imagined exclamation (βοήσεις) upon looking at it in *AP* 9.793.

⁹¹ Cf. Männlein-Robert 2007a, 268–69; 2007b, 94–95. More generally on Hellenistic epigrammatic games of voice, see Tueller 2008, esp. 141–54.

⁹² Plut. *Mor. (De glor. Ath.)* 346 F (= Simon. fr. 190b Bergk): πλὴν ὁ Σιμωνίδης τὴν μὲν ζωγραφίαν ποιήσιν σιωπῶσαν προσαγορεύει, τὴν δὲ ποιήσιν ζωγραφίαν λαλοῦσαν. Of the many scholarly treatments of the Simonidean dictum, Carson 1992 and Sprigath 2004 are the most sophisticated, while Franz 1999, 61–83, discusses the immediate cultural and intellectual reception. In fact, the topos seems as old as Greek poetry itself: compare the *sounds* described in the context of the *images* on Hephaestus' shield for Achilles (e.g., *Il.*

characterises it as “frequently repeated” (Plut. *Mor.* [*Quomodo adul.*] 17 E); we can be sure that the sentiment resonated throughout the fifth century B.C.E. and beyond, from the Athenian stage to the philosophical enclaves of the Academy, and not least in ecphrastic epigram itself.⁹³

So can Myron’s cow talk? Epigrams toy with this question in a variety of playful ways. The cow would address us, as one anonymous poet puts it, if only Myron had worked inwards within (*AP* 9.727):

καὶ χαλῇ περ ἑοῦσα λάλησεν ἂν ἡ κεραὴ βοῦς,
εἴ οἱ σπλάγχνα Μύρων ἔνδον ἔτεχνάσατο.

The horned cow would also have spoken, although she’s bronze, if Myron had worked entrails inside her.

The knowing joke here is that—within so many epigrams on the statue—Myron’s cow really *does* talk, directly addressing her viewers as readers. While some poems leave their speaker ambiguous, *prosopopoeia* is a mainstay of the surviving series: out of the thirty-six Greek epigrams, thirteen are figured as verbal responses spoken in the first person by the cow; what is more, the speaking cow is made to address the same subjects as the speaking poet—whether a stranger, a herdsman or a calf.⁹⁴

Associated with this question of voice is the issue of the statue’s sound. Even if Myron’s cow cannot talk in sensible or rational tones, the epigrams interrogate the sculpture’s capacity to moo (μυκάσθαι).⁹⁵ This topos of the *visualised* lowing cow is to be found in antiquity’s earliest and most celebrated ecphrastic description: amid the lengthy Homeric description of Achilles’ shield we see (or should that be hear?) how a

18.493–95, 502, 505, 525–26, 530, 569–72, 574–76, 580–81, 586; n.b. too how the depicted king stands “in silence” at 18.556), or the way in which Hephaestus gives voice to his sculpted golden maidens at *Il.* 18.419–20.

⁹³For an overview, see Männlein-Robert 2007b, esp. 13–35, with discussion of, e.g., Aesch. fr. 78a.1–36 (*TrGrF* 3.195–98) and Pl. *Phdr.* 275d. Männlein-Robert 2007b now offers the most detailed exploration of the theme in the context of epigram specifically, which evidently stretched back to the earliest poems on paintings and statues (most importantly *AP* 6.352, discussed on 38–43). Not for nothing do we find the topos in Posidippus’ opening *Andriantopoiika* epigram on Hecataeus’ Philitas (so “ensouled,” ἔμψυχος, that although the statue is made of bronze, one would think it speaks, αὐδήσ[ον]τι δ’ ἔοικεν, 63.7–8 A–B).

⁹⁴See *AP* 9.713, 714, 719, 720, 721, 723, 729, 730, 731, 732, 742, 794, 797. On the addressee of the poems, see Speyer 1975, 175–76. Tueller 2008 now provides a sound introduction to the games of voice in Hellenistic epigram more generally.

⁹⁵μυκά: *AP* 9.721.1; μυκήσεται: *AP* 9.724.1; *AP* 9.728.1; *AP* 9.730.1; μυκάται: *AP* 9.740.3; ἀπομυκάσθαι: *AP* 9.742.5. Cf. Auson. 67.1: *mugitum*; *Ep. Bob.* 11.1: *mugiet*.

bull, dragged by two lions, “bellows, mooing loudly” (ὁ δὲ μακρὰ μεμυκῶς / ἔλκετο, *Il.* 18.580–81); when Philostratus the Younger came to evoke an actual painting of the Homeric description—the Homeric ecphrasis now visualised, as it were, while simultaneously verbalised within the make-believe *Eikones*—Philostratus writes that you can almost “hear the sound of cows mooing in the painting/description . . . Is this not the height of vividness?” (τὸ δὲ καὶ μυκωμένων ὥσπερ ἀκούειν ἐν τῇ γραφῇ . . . πῶς οὐκ ἐναργείας πρόσω; *Im.* 10.17).⁹⁶ The ecphrastic epigrams on Myron's sculpted cow engage with the same conceit and in no less complex ways: can the statue low?

Among the earliest poems to explore the theme are two epigrams by Antipater (*AP* 9.724, 728):

ἀ δάμαλις, δοκέω, μυκῆσεται· ἦ ρ' ὁ Προμηθεὺς
οὐχὶ μόνος, πλάττεις ἔμπνοα καὶ σὺ Μύρων.

The cow, I think, is about to moo; it is not only Prometheus who fashions breathing things, but you too, Myron.

ἀ δάμαλις, δοκέω, μυκῆσεται· ἦν δὲ βραδύνη
χαλκὸς ὁ μὴ νοέων αἴτιος, οὐχὶ Μύρων.

The cow, I think, is about to moo; but if it delays, the cause is the senseless bronze, not Myron.

As Gutzwiller (1998, 249–50) has shown, these texts clearly once functioned as some sort of epigrammatic diptych: not only do they share the same opening clause, they also both close with the name of the artist; while the first poem compares Myron's statue with the mythological craftsmanship of Prometheus, moreover, the second provides an aetiological commentary on the first, explaining why the cow still delays (βραδύνη) in its lowing.⁹⁷ “In this instance,” writes Männlein-Robert, “the poet has us consider a—real—cow's lowing, which of course, we never actually hear . . . The materiality of the cow points anew to one of the clear restrictions of plastic art: even if Myron is capable of creating a deceptively lifelike cow, he is still incapable of giving the material, bronze, one of the essential

⁹⁶ On the Philostratean passage, with its self-conscious nod to the technical language for theorising ecphrasis (as well as the residual pun on *graphie*), see Squire 2011, chap. 7.

⁹⁷ An epigram attributed to Demetrius of Bithynia clearly offered an additional variation on the opening gambit of Antipater's two poems: ἦν μ' ἐσίδη μόσχος, μυκῆσεται, “If a calf sees me, it will low” (*AP* 9.730.1).

characteristics of liveliness, the ability to speak aloud.”⁹⁸ As ever, though, the epigrammatic situation is still more complex. Important here is the final word of Antipater’s two epigrams, which reserves for the close of the poem the name of the statue’s artist: Μύρων. In a typical twist, the artist’s name gives the statue the voice claimed as the poet’s own unique poetic prerogative: by aurally punning on the verb in the previous line (μυκίσεται), while also echoing the onomatopoeic sound that the word represents, *Moo*-ron’s cow is, in a quite literal sense, made to low. The artist, it seems, does add voice to the statue after all, albeit with a little help from the poet: in this uncertain world of epigram (note the δοκέω in both opening lines), the realism of each poem’s sound seems to match the realism of the statue’s visual form.⁹⁹

My concern here is less with Antipater’s particular role in developing this name-game than in the discursive framework that governs it. The visual persuasiveness of Myron’s statue, I suggest, occasions reflection about the rhetorical persuasiveness of language as a medium for representing it: the mimetic power of the image frames (and is framed by) reflection about the comparative mimetic resources of words. In similar vein, the τέχνη of the clever artist, crafting a cow so lifelike that it lows, comes to mirror the τέχνη of the clever poet—the sophistication with which he turns the silent image into audible sounds, or promises to turn audible sounds back into silent images.¹⁰⁰ By at least the late first century C.E., the phenomenon of verbally representing visual representation came to be expressly theorised in a number of Greek rhetorical

⁹⁸ Männlein-Robert 2007a, 268; cf. Männlein-Robert 2007b, 94 “Damit ist eine deutliche Grenze der bildenden Kunst aufgezeigt: Mag Myron eine täuschend lebensechte Kuh schaffen können, so ist er doch nicht in der Lage, dem Material Bronze ein wesentliches Merkmal für tatsächliche Belebtheit zu verleihen, nämlich die Fähigkeit der Lautäußerung.”

⁹⁹ As the first book of Philodemus’ newly discovered (albeit fragmentary) *On Poems* confirms, Hellenistic critics evidently compiled lists of such onomatopoeic terms: indeed Philod. *de Poem.* 106.8 (Janko) explicitly includes the word μυκᾶσθ[αι] as an example of verbs that “move the person hearing it, since their similarity to the experience of the ears makes them seem to be correct” (106.10–14; cf. Janko 2000, 315, n. 1, for parallels). In terms of our epigrams, the prosodic difference between Μύρων and μυκᾶσθαι (i.e., *Mûron* / *mûkasthai*) adds further complexity: were they to turn these written poems, anthologised in the collection, back into spoken sounds, readers would be aurally alerted to the illusion belying visual appearances.

¹⁰⁰ On the τέχνη of the artist, see above, n. 46. For the “clever” artist, see *AP* 9.795.1 (Μύρων σοφός), as well as Posid. 66.3 A–B (σοφὸν χρέος). Compare also *AP* 9.741, associating the labor of the artist with that of the cow upon which he has labored (ὥς τινα βοῦν ἐργάτιν εἰργάσατο).

handbooks, each under the subject-heading of ecphrasis: although the exact relation between epigrams on artworks and the elaborate discussions of these *Progymnasmata* remains debated,¹⁰¹ it is significant that Hermogenes defined ecphrasis as the rhetorical attempt almost (σχεδόν) to bring about seeing through hearing.¹⁰² While ecphrasis is conceived as an attempt at visualisation, then, it is rationalised as a specific sort of visualisation, refracted through a textual lens: ecphrasis constitutes only a partial representation of the visual prototype represented.¹⁰³

In this sense, the mimeticism of Myron's image, at once partial and complete, foreshadows the mimetic ambiguities of the poems that describe it. For all their invitations to look and gaze upon the image, frequently couched in elaborate counterfactual conditional clauses, epigrammatists were aware that access to the visual image is now mediated through the verbal language of the poem.¹⁰⁴ Just as epigram toys with the authenticity and fiction of the statue, moreover, the poems also play with their own status as verbal representations of that visual representation, whether emphasising the different resources of images and texts or teasingly collapsing those ontological disparities. The replicative strategies of pictures and the words that describe them are made to coincide.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ See above, n. 15. On the *Progymnasmata* more generally, and the ancient ecphrastic tradition to which they respond, see, e.g., Squire 2009, 142–44, and Webb 2009.

¹⁰² Hermog. *Prog.* 10.48 (p. 23 Rabe): δεῖ γὰρ τὴν ἐρμηνείαν διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς σχεδὸν τὴν ὄψιν μηχανᾶσθαι. Compare Nicolaus 70 Felten on how elements of ecphrasis “bring the subjects of the speech before our eyes and almost makes the audience into spectators” (ὅπ’ ὄψιν ἡμῖν ἄγοντα ταῦτα, περὶ ὧν εἰσιν οἱ λόγοι, καὶ μονονοῦ θεατὰς εἶναι παρασκευάζοντα). On the “almosts” (σχεδόν / μονονοῦ), see Becker 1995, 28 (with important Greek and Latin *comparanda* cited in n. 49) and Goldhill 2007, 3 (“rhetorical theory knows well that its descriptive power is a technique of illusion, semblance, of making to appear”).

¹⁰³ Useful here is the distinction Mitchell 1994, 151–81, makes between the “ecphrastic hope,” “ecphrastic fear,” and “ecphrastic indifference” of describing images in words. As I argue at greater length elsewhere (Squire 2011, esp. chap. 7; cf. Squire 2010c, responding to Webb 2009, esp. 28–37), I do not think this ancient framework for theorising ecphrasis any less complex in conception than the (post)modern: in addition to the fundamental discussion of Fowler 1991, cf., e.g., Francis 2009, 3, concluding of *Il.* 18.478–608, *Theog.* 570–616 and *WD* 60–109 that “the relationship between word and image in ancient ekphrasis is, from its beginning, complex and interdependent, presenting sophisticated reflection on the conception and process of both verbal and visual representation.”

¹⁰⁴ See *AP* 9.730.1 (ἐσίδη), 732.1 (ἐσίδης), 733.2 (δερχόμενος), 738.3 (δερχόμενος), 740.3 (ἴδ’), 793.1 (ιδών), 797.1 (εισορόων), Posid. 63.3 A–B (εἶδ’); cf. *AP* 9.739.4 on the “eyes” (ὄφθαλμούς) of the herdsman. For a (non-exhaustive) list of other examples of the instruction to “see” in ecphrastic epigram, see Rossi 2001, 17, n. 13.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Platt 2002, 38, on the Hellenistic epigrams of Praxiteles’ Cnidian Aphrodite statue: “The strategies of image and text thus coincide, for the mimetic quality of the forms

But the multiple levels of replication at play here recede still further. We are faced not only with texts which verbally respond to a visual stimulus, but also with poems that feign to represent monumental inscriptions which were once physically attached to that image. This explains the demonstrative and deictic adjectives that proliferate in these poems,¹⁰⁶ as well as the various first-person pronouns:¹⁰⁷ “I am Myron’s little cow” (βοιδιδόν εἰμι Μύρωνος, *AP* 9.713.1), as the opening words of the series’ opening epigram programmatically put it, punning on the standard epigraphic principle whereby the inscribed object addresses its viewers in the first person.¹⁰⁸ The epigrams, no less than the bronze cow to which they refer, are imagined as being “bound to a stone base.”¹⁰⁹

This playful epigraphic conceit is a mainstay of the epigrammatic genre, whereby as Bing and Bruss (2007a, 8) put it, “literary epigram retains the inscriptions’ conventional *deixis*, but suddenly there is no ‘there’ there.” Liberated from its traditional generic function as epideictic inscription chiselled into stone, epigram became acutely sensitive to its newfound status within the poetic anthology.¹¹⁰ What once belonged to the realm of material monuments is knowingly translated into the stuff of the papyrus roll—composed for and experienced through the handwritten word, compiled into neatly arranged epigrammatic col-

of ekphrasis which we find in these epigrams actually reflects the nature of the statue itself, which is a mimetic (or in stylistic terms, naturalistic), representation of the goddess.”

¹⁰⁶For some examples, see *AP* 9.714.1, 717.1, 718.1, 720.1, 738.1, 793.1. On Greek “ventriloquist epigram,” whereby objects are bequeathed a first-person voice that addresses the reader, see Burzachechi 1962, with further comments in Keesling 2003, 17–21, and Tueller 2008.

¹⁰⁷First-person pronouns/personal adjectives are to be found in the following epigrams: *AP* 9.713.2, 714.1, 719.1, 720.2, 721.1, 723.1, 729.1, 730.1, 742.1, 743.3, 743.5, 794.1, 797.1. Cf. Auson. 63.2, 63.3, 63.6, 64.3, 65.2, 69.1, 69.2, 70.3, 71.3; *Ep. Bob.* 12.1.

¹⁰⁸The same programmatic statement opens Ausonius’ epigrammatic sequence (*bucula sum*, 63.1). Other poems pun on the standard epigraphic formula of the artistic signature (e.g., *AP* 9.719.1) or dedication (*AP* 9.714.2: ἔστασας; 9.713.2: ἔστησε).

¹⁰⁹Cf. *AP* 9.719.2 (δῆσε βάσει λιθίνῳ), in the context of Leonidas’ epigram discussed above, pp. 603–5. The epigraphic fallacy here adds an additional dimension to the theme of “lying” that the poem explores; and note the further ambiguity of the first person pronoun—at once referring to the image and to this (literary copy of the monumental) text. A related trope recurs in, e.g., *AP* 9.720.1, 723.1, 9.740.1 and 9.742.6: for discussion, see Prioux 2006, 140, n. 45.

¹¹⁰On the development of Hellenistic epigrams from poems inscribed in stone to collections on the papyrus roll, see *inter alios* Bing 1988, 10–48, esp. 17–18; 1995; 1998, esp. 19–35; Gutzwiller 1998, 47–119; 2007, 178–88; Lauxtermann 1998; Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004, 306–38; Bruss 2005, 168–71; Meyer 2005, esp. 96–106; Petrovic 2005; Livingstone and Nisbet 2010, 5–21.

lections that circulate apart from the objects that they celebrate.¹¹¹ Of course, epigram could still be inscribed—the tradition of epigrammatic epitaphs and dedications very much continues. But there develops a new and high self-consciousness about the medium, especially in epigrams on purported artworks.

This self-consciousness is reflected in numerous scenarios: the gesture of setting painted epigrams alongside their (supposed) artistic referents in the “Casa degli Epigrammi” at Pompeii and “Casa di Propertio” at Assisi, for example, or else of inscribing programmatic epigrams beside the artistic subjects depicted on the so-called *Tabulae Iliacae* (miniscule marble tablets that themselves visualise literary subjects only then to verbalise them once more).¹¹² Closely related are the six Greek calligrammatic “picture-poems” which, lacking any “real” epigraphic referent, quite literally draw a monumental epigraphic object out of their varying verse lengths (*AP* 15.21–22, 24–27: in the shape of an egg, axe, Eros statue, panpipes, and two altars).¹¹³ Epigram might have been “destined by its very nature to be *anthologized*” as Alan Cameron puts it (1993, 4, his emphasis). But it nonetheless remained highly sensitive to its inscriptional origins. Indeed, the very identity of the genre is founded upon that epigraphic derivation: as the name “epi-gram” suggests, the genre defines itself around its “inscription on” an object.¹¹⁴ A remarkable awareness about medial lability ensues—what Bing and others have

¹¹¹That is not to deny mutual connections between epigrams destined for literary collections and those monumentally inscribed: see Bettenworth 2007.

¹¹²I have discussed these scenarios elsewhere: on Pompeii and Assisi, see Squire 2009, 176–89, 239–93 (esp. 275), and Squire 2010c; cf. independently Prioux 2008, 25–140; on the *Tabulae Iliacae*, see Squire 2010b; 2011.

¹¹³Cf. Simonini and Gualdoni 1978; Ernst 1991, 54–94; Männlein-Robert 2007b, 140–54; Luz 2008; Squire 2009, 165–69; 2010b. On the generic name (sometimes referred to by modern critics as *technopaegnia*), see Guichard 2006, 83–84; on the larger generic history, see Ernst 1986. The earliest poems are attributed to Simias and probably date to the early third century B.C.E. (*AP* 15.22, 24, 27). My reading rejects the literal-minded interpretations of earlier scholars, who have tended simply to debate whether these were “not really figure poems at all” but rather designed as inscriptions to fit the shape of their specific objects (Cameron 1995, 33–37): cf. Gow and Page 1965, 2.511–16, with further bibliography in Strodel 2002, 265–71. Subsequent Latin authors further elaborated such visual-verbal epigrammatic games: see Ernst 1991, 95–142, and Rühl 2006 on the *uersus intexti* of Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius, and compare a first-century B.C.E. poem by Laevius (Morel 1963, 60–61, fr. 22, with discussion in Courtney 1993, 119, 136–37).

¹¹⁴On the history of the name “epigram,” see Puelma 1996, although there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the term had generic significance much earlier than the first century C.E. (cf., e.g., Gutzwiller 1998, 8, n. 3, 47–53; Meyer 2005, esp. 30–31; Bing and Bruss 2007a).

termed the genre's "game of supplementation" or *Ergänzungsspiel*; epigram defers any final decision about original context, prompting readers to contemplate the distinctive literary circumstances of the anthology precisely as anthology.¹¹⁵

Andrej Petrovic has recently argued that this change in epigrammatic medium—from stone to book—helps to explain the changing rhetoric of artistic response in Hellenistic epideictic epigram. Instead of detailing the dedicant or recipient of the object perceived, attention turns, in the absence of the physical image, to its cumulative effect, now mediated through words—its lifelikeness, illusion and realism: "surely one of the reasons for this difference between Hellenistic and Archaic epigram," Petrovic concludes, "is to be found in the transformation of the medium" (2005, 40, my translation). But there seems to me an additional, and wholly more self-referential, connection between the make-believe of the artwork and the make-believe of epigram at large. As we have seen, epigrammatic responses to Myron's cow revolve around its mimetic virtuosity. And yet the ultimate deceit of the statue goes hand in hand with the generic conceits of epigram: the ontological liminality of the image, fluctuating between a real-life cow and its artistic mimesis, serves to figure the liminal ontology of epigram, at once a monumental inscription and its tome-trapped literary representation. As a fictional inscribed text—an anthologised poem laying claims to an *in situ* physical existence—literary epigram finds a parallel in the fictionalised cow, at once a real heifer and a sculpted representation. The promise and failure of Myron's naturalistic cow, in other words, serves as a congenial device for thinking through the artifice of the genre: the virtual reality of the image itself replicates the illusionism that inheres within the epigrammatic anthology.

IV. CONCLUSION: JOINING THE HERD AND SEALING THE SERIES

We began this article with Goethe and his prototypical dismissal of the epigrams on Myron's cow as "dull" and "suspect." We can now see how the theme of replication which made the poems seem so tedious

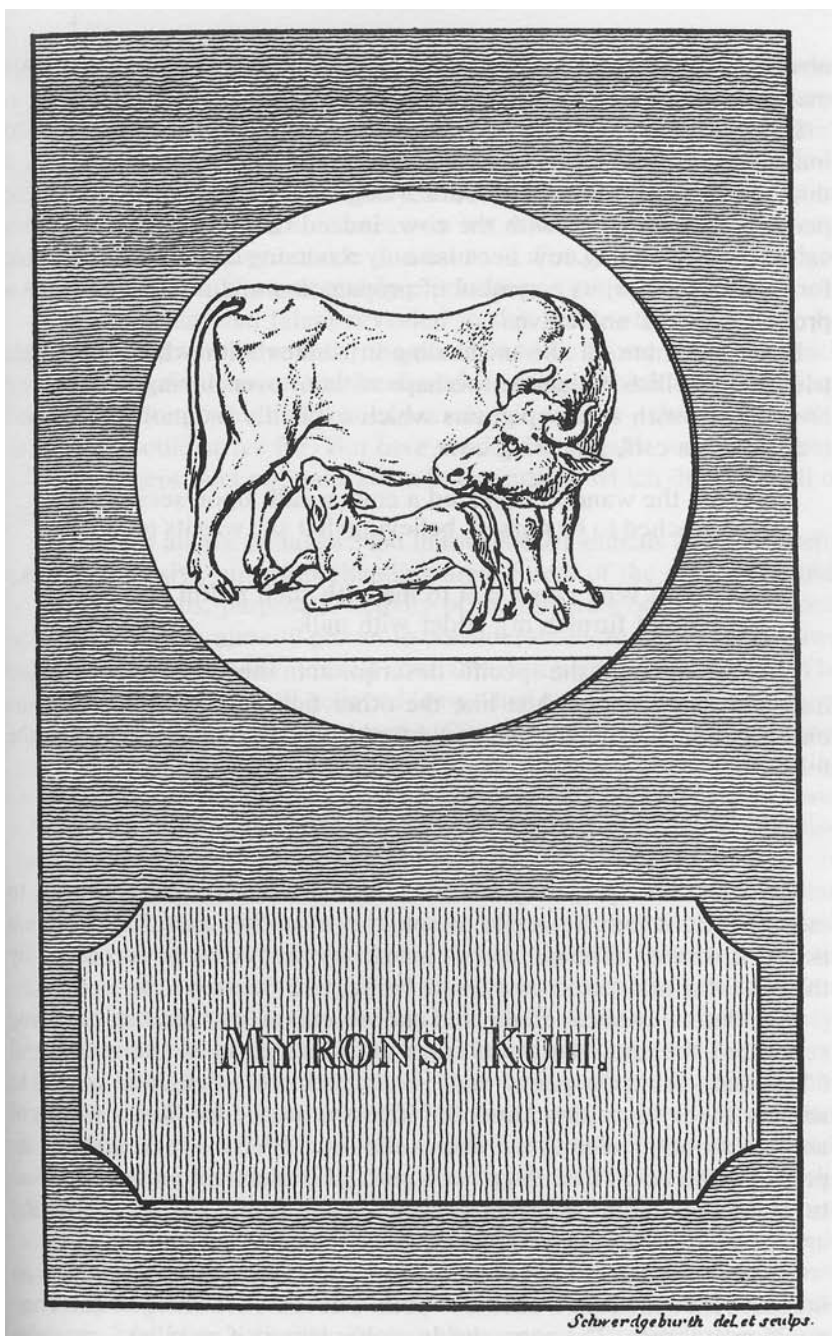
¹¹⁵ See Bing 1995 (revised in Bing 2009, 85–105), along with Meyer 1993 and 2005. As Bing 1998, 29, puts it: "Epigram . . . gradually outgrew its chiselled origins, acquiring a parallel life as a γένος ἐπιδεικτικόν, where it might be composed strictly as literature. The result is a hermeneutic crux deriving from the fact that, in spite of its development away from inscription, epigram retained the generic conventions of its incised counterpart."

to modern critics in fact contributed to their enduring popularity in antiquity. While Goethe glossed over the representational games that these epigrams play out—effortlessly moving from the Greek poems on Myron's cow to a specially commissioned visual reproduction of it, inviting present-day sculptors to render that drawing as the "original" three-dimensional sculpture once more (fig. 1)¹¹⁶—ancient poets exploited Myron's sculptural make-believe to interrogate the make-believe of their own epigrammatic response. Emphasising both the completeness and partiality of Myron's mimesis, and framing their discussion within much larger discourses about the epistemology of vision, the epigrams delight in their recession of replications: from a real cow, to its image, to an appended text, to the representation of that text within the poetic anthology. The image's fluctuation between reality and representation, and between absent visual object and present verbal evocation, mirrors epigram's own peculiar status as something both genuine and fabricated: the gap between art and nature, and between word and image, becomes a metaliterary gauge for measuring the proximity and distance between epigram as engraved physical monument and collectable literary entity of the page. As convincing simulacrum, Myron's bronze cow is playfully and self-consciously exploited to prefigure the simulations of the genre.¹¹⁷

But were ancient epigrammatists really so attuned to the metapoetic significance of Myron's statue? To my mind, such self-reflexivity is reflected in the very sequence of surviving epigrams: poets, it seems, soon realised that a multitude of Myron's cows were being herded within the anthology; aware that there were no straightforward distinctions to be made between poetic models and variants, moreover, they further replicated this replica series by adding more and more poems to the collection. Not for nothing does the speaking cow of our opening epigram on the statue

¹¹⁶See Goethe 1986, 26: "We enclose a sketch and would wish that a skillful artist would create the relief portrait once again as a statue." Goethe's aestheticising agenda leads him to overlook the irony here: setting out to "disregard all the misleading assumptions the epigrams make about the cow, and try to focus on the actual sculpture" (26), Goethe ends up attempting to *re-produce* the image from these texts, presenting K. A. Schwerdgeburth's drawing as frontispiece ("the magnificent work is now accessible, even though as an inexact reproduction," 26). Significantly, though, Goethe concludes his discussion not with reference to this imperfect materialised image, but by composing an epigram of his own, describing the image in "a few rhythmic lines which may give a summary of our view" (29). As such, Goethe offers the ultimate in both ecphrastic promise and ecphrastic failure.

¹¹⁷My language here of course derives from Baudrillard 1994. My suggestion, though, is that, far from some cultural particularity of the postmodern western world, such self-reflexive play with "simulacra and simulation" proved just as rife in Graeco-Roman antiquity.



An engraving of Myron's cow by K. A. Schwerdgeburth, commissioned by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Photograph by the author.

instruct the herdsman to “drive me off to the herd” (εἰς ἀγέλην μ’ ἄπαγε, *AP* 9.713.2)—to round this cow-poem up alongside the others.¹¹⁸ The association between herdsman and poet (and indeed between cows and poems) was fundamental to Hellenistic bucolic, at least in the wake of Theocritus: the epigrammatic opening to Artemidorus of Tarsus’ bucolic anthology, compiled in the first half of the first century B.C.E., provides an obvious comparandum, claiming to have reunited “bucolic Muses” (βωκολικαὶ Μοῖσαι) that “consist of a single fold and flock” (ἐντὶ μιᾶς μάνδρας, ἐντὶ μιᾶς ἀγέλας, *AP* 9.205).¹¹⁹ In the context of our surviving series of Myron’s cow-poems, this bucolic metaphor serves to draw attention to the collective significance of the epigrams within the anthology—their playfully competing claims to artistic-cum-poetic originality. As we have said, it is impossible to determine how the sequence of poems in our *Palatine Anthology* relates to earlier epigrammatic collections. But the editor of our surviving compilation certainly appears to have realised the joke: note how a poem by Theodoridas celebrating twelve bronze cow statues is placed immediately after the first sequence of poems (*AP* 9.743 = Theodoridas 17).¹²⁰ So, too, does the poetic series, just when we think it all over, begin anew later in the same book, with the six additional poems by Julian of Egypt (*AP* 9.793–98). With so many cow-poems grazing, it is no surprise that even Myron himself struggles to tell apart the “real” image from all these reproductions (βοῦν ἰδίαν ποτὲ βουσί Μύρων μυχθεῖσαν ἐζήτει, *AP* 9.725.1):¹²¹ herded within the anthology, the multiple poems on Myron’s cow inhabit a world of mimesis mimeticised—we are faced with copies of copies of copies *ad infinitum*.

¹¹⁸ Whatever the date of this opening epigram, and its relation to those that immediately follow it (see Gutzwiller 1998, 246, n. 42), it seems to have been understood to introduce the sequence by at least the fourth century C.E.—and probably even earlier. It is for this reason that Ausonius quotes its opening words in his own opening epigram on the cow: see below, pp. 620–21, along with Cameron 1993, 82. For other epigrammatic references to the herd, see *AP* 9.720.2, 725, 730.2, 740.2; cf. Auson. 63.5–6, 75; *Ep. Bob.* 10.2.

¹¹⁹ For a well-referenced introduction to the topos of the poet as herdsman, see Gutzwiller 2006, 10–23. On Artemidorus of Tarsus, see Gutzwiller 1996, 123–28, along with Page 1981, 113–14, ad *AP* 9.205.

¹²⁰ Cf. Gow and Page 1965, 2.549–50, noting that the poem’s position in Book 9 “might be due rather to its subject than to its purpose” (549).

¹²¹ The verb ἐζήτει perhaps signals a further pun here. Philological *zetemata* were a common pursuit in the Museum at Alexandria, referring to scholarly “inquiries” into challenging aspects of canonical Greek texts, especially Homer (for discussion, see Pfeiffer 1968, 69–71). So is the image of Myron, “searching for” his real cow amongst its artistic reproductions, framed in terms of the scholar, who “searches for” the authentic epigrammatic original “mixed in” amid other poetic copies?

By the time we get to Ausonius' Latin versions in the fourth century C.E., the distinction between "model" and "copy" has been blurred almost beyond recognition. Take the epigram which opens Ausonius' sequence on the statue (63):¹²²

Bucula sum, caelo genitoris facta Myronis
 aerea: nec factam me puto, sed genitam,
 sic me taurus init, sic proxima bucula mugit,
 sic uitulus sitiens ubera nostra petit.
 miraris, quod fallo gregem? gregis ipse magister
 inter pascentes me numerare solet.

I am a little cow, wrought in bronze by the chisel of Myron my bearer. No—not wrought, but rather, I think, born: so does the bull mount me, so lows the cow by my side, and so does the thirsty calf seek my udders. Do you wonder that the herd mistakes me? The master of the herd himself is used to reckoning me among the cows as they graze.

Although the epigram begins, like the opening poem in the surviving *Palatine Anthology* sequence, with a first-person declaration ("I am a little cow . . .," cf. *AP* 9.713.1: βοίδιόν εἰμι Μύρωνος), it is clear that this is no straightforward imitation. By the second line, the territory has already shifted to a different epigrammatic model (*AP* 9.726), and the second couplet relates to yet another variant (*AP* 9.730, itself epitomising a number of further variations on the theme); little wonder that, by the third couplet, readers are prone to being duped by this poetic replication in the same way that the poem's herd mistakes this artistic copy for an original (*miraris, quod fallo gregem*—*miraris* of course punning on the standard ecphrastic description of the image's amazing lifelikeness).¹²³ Such is the Bloomian burden of "coming after" that it is no less difficult to distinguish poetic prototype from derivative reproduction than it is to tell the real cow apart from its mimetic representation. Just as the "master of the herd" (*gregis magister*) reckons this make-believe cow among her real-life counterparts, the pseudo-bucolic herdsman of these cows-cum-poems is said to (mis)take this original epigram for a replica,

¹²² On the poem's derivation, see Lausberg 1982, 236–37, and Kay 2001, 198–202. More generally on the "double secondariness" of Ausonius' Latin ecphrastic epigrams, responding not merely to statues but to famous earlier Greek epigrams on statues, compare Elsner 2002, 11–13.

¹²³ For some helpful introductory comments on the trope of wonder in ecphrastic epigram (and beyond), see Gutzwiller 2002a, esp. 96–97.

thereby confusing epigrammatic copy with epigrammatic prototype (and vice versa). The themes are nicely reconciled in the pun on the word *numerare* in the poem's final line: on the one hand, the term acknowledges the plural number of replications counted (both verbal and visual); on the other, it perhaps reminds of the art-historical discourse surrounding the statue—of Pliny's characterisation of Myron as *numerosior in arte* (at once “more prolific” and “more talented” in his *ars*).¹²⁴

Myron's sculpture, no less than the epigrammatic tradition of responding to it, quickly took on a life of its own. We find the poems alluded to in all manner of unlikely contexts: Lucillius' exhortation that the herdsman “pasture his flock far away from here” (τὰν ἀγέλαν πόρρω νέμει, *AP* 11.178.1, derived from *AP* 9.715.1), for example, or an epigram on a bronze statue of a satyr, itself formed in the mould of Euenus' poem on the heifer (*APlan.* 246, derived from *AP* 9.717). But (the epigrammatic celebration of) Myron's cow also escaped the margins of the anthology altogether. Is it farfetched, for instance, to wonder whether Herodas had the image in mind when he makes a character recoil before (a painted?) representation of a bull in his make-believe Asclepian temple at Cos, with “its look of day and life” (*Mim.* 4.66–71)?¹²⁵ An allusion is perhaps also at play in Moschus' *Europa*, where the heroine declares, upon stroking the Zeus-bull, that it “lacks only voice” (Mosch. *Eur.* 107).¹²⁶ When Propertius evokes the Palatine Temple of Apollo in Rome in the late first century B.C.E., he wittily remarks that there are now four cows, all of them

¹²⁴For the term, see Pollitt 1974, 409–15, discussing the Plinian passage on 411–14, and associating the Latin *numerus* with the Greek concept of ῥυθμός. As Pollitt concedes, “*numerosus* has two basic meanings”—an essentially literal sense, “manifold, numerous, prolific,” and a stylistic sense, “rhythmical, measured” (411). The loss of comparative sources proves crippling here, but if art historical discourse viewed Myron as iconic for his artistic versatility, might this add an important additional dimension to the versatile *epigrammatic* celebrations of that artistry?

¹²⁵This, moreover, within a text which itself poses simultaneously as visual performance, audible narrative and readable text: cf., e.g., Hunter 1993.

¹²⁶On the association with the Myron cow epigrams here, and on “speaking animals” more generally, see Männlein-Robert 2007b, 95–99, esp. 98–99; Laird 1993, 23, n. 29, also compares the ram depicted on Jason's cloak at *Ap. Arg.* 1.763–67. The allusion seems all the clearer in Ovid's ecphrastic evocation of Europa's encounter with the Zeus-bull, described in the context of Arachne's tapestry (*Ov. Met.* 6.103–7): so real is the embroidered image, that “you would think that this were a real cow and a real sea” (*uerum taurum, freta uera putares*, 6.104); indeed, it is Europa herself who is here “deceived by the image of the bull” (*elusam . . . imagine tauri*, 6.103), just as (Ovid's ecphrastic description of) Arachne's tapestry at once amazes and deceives with its virtuoso illusionism.

crafted by Myron, and all of them *uiuīda signa* (2.31.7–8).¹²⁷ So, too, the conceit of Myron's talking statue also seeps back into the apocrypha of artistic invention. Pliny's *Natural History* (34.89) is by no means the only source to tell of the Archaic artist Perillus, whose statue of a bull—by an ingenious torturous contraption—could contain a human victim within: heat the statue over glowing coals, and the agonised screaming of the desperate prisoner would literally make the ox bellow—or so, at least, it would seem.¹²⁸ In Ovid's version of the story there can be little doubt that the “false ox” (*falsum . . . bouem*, *Tr.* 3.11.40) has the Myron cow epigrams in sight: as Perillus ironically boasts, before himself suffering the torture that he had invented, the statue “will moo and will have the voice of a real bull” (*mugiet, et ueri uox erit illa bouis*, *Tr.* 3.11.48).¹²⁹

I want to conclude, though, by returning to the *Palatine Anthology* and to three epigrams that have been placed directly between the two surviving groups of poems on Myron's cow (*AP* 9.746, 747, 750). In each case, the explicit subject is not Myron's representation of a cow but rather an associated taglio representation of cows in jasper. One of the poems is attributed to Polemon (*AP* 9.746):¹³⁰

¹²⁷ *Atque aram circum steterant armenta Myronis, / quattuor artificis, uiuīda signa, boues* (“And around the altar [of the Palatine Temple of Apollo] stood Myron's herd, the four cows of the artist, living statues”). Barchiesi 2005, 322, notes the metapoetic significance of this reference within Propertius' Roman “replicaland”; cf. also Breed 2003, 44, n. 37. Corso 2004, 34, by contrast, takes the reference at literal face value, assuming that these four statues were genuinely displayed on the Palatine: he consequently treats them as further evidence of Myron's “specialization in representations of animals.” Of course, it is possible that there “really were” such statues—that Myron's cow was physically replicated, just like the epigrams that celebrate it. But the topos still raises important questions about fiction and make-believe—questions which have important implications for our understanding of the ecphrasis of the temple that follows, and not least the sincerity of the poem's overarching Augustan framework.

¹²⁸ On Pliny's account, see Carey 2003, 106–7: “In an ironic reversal of the epigrams celebrating the naturalism of Myron's cow, it is no longer real cows who respond to their representation by lowing, but the sculpture itself which bellows, when someone is put inside and a fire lit beneath” (107). Other references to the story include Pind. *Pyth.* 1.95–98, Polyb. 12.25, Cic. *In Verr.* 2.4.73, Ov. *Tr.* 3.11.39–54 and Diod. Sic. 13.90.

¹²⁹ Compare Ovid's explicit description of the statue at *Pont.* 4.1.34, calling it “the work of Myron which resembles a real cow” (*ut similis uerae uacca Myronis opus*).

¹³⁰ The poem (and the tricky first verb of the second hexameter) is discussed in Gow and Page 1968, 2.401–2 (Polemon 1); cf. Lausberg 1982, 241, and Platt 2007, 92 (for an important discussion of its final line). Beckby 1958, 808, compares Helioid. *Aethiop.* 5.14.

ἑπτά βοῶν σφραγίδα βραχὺς λίθος εἶχεν ἴασις,
 ὥς μίαν, ὥς πάσας ἔμπνοα δερκομένας.
 καὶ τάχα κἄν ᾗἀπέρεψεᾗ τὰ βοῖδια· νῦν δὲ κέκλειται
 τῇ χρυσῇ μάνδρῃ τὸ βραχὺ βουκόλιον.

The little jasper stone holds a seal of seven cows as though they were one, and all looking as though they were alive. Perhaps the cows would have wandered off; but as it is the little herd is confined in the golden pen.

While perpetuating the standard language for describing the virtual reality of Myron's cow (its living and breathing quality: ἔμπνοα),¹³¹ the single heifer has apparently multiplied, reminding one perhaps of Propertius' four cows on the Palatine: despite the cows still looking "as one" (ὥς μίαν), and despite the diminutive size of the representation (emphasised in the first and last lines), the gem represents no fewer than *seven* cows.¹³² The various replications of Myron's statue (or rather the poems dedicated to it) have been further replicated; what is more, just as Myron's lone heifer has turned into seven cattle, the bronze medium has been transformed into a miniature jasper gem.¹³³ The games that are staged here are mindboggling in their ontological complexity: the epigrammatic reproduction of Myron's reproduction of a cow is itself reproduced as a poem concerned with reproducing in verse a jasper reproduction. Translate the poem into Latin, as is the case in *Epigrammata Bobiensia* 18, and that theme of replication becomes all the more pressing, refracted this time through the representation of a Greek poem through a Latin lens.

In this capacity, it is worth noting the very function ascribed to the gem. As the first line reveals, the jasper serves as a *sphragis*, a seal stone that is itself intended to simulate the image that has been engraved on

¹³¹ Note too how the noun βοῖδια looks back to one of the most common terms for referring to the bronze statue: as Gow and Page 1968, 2.402, note, it is "a stock word in descriptions of Myron's *Cow*."

¹³² Gow and Page 1968, 2.401, contrast this with the five cows rendered on a jasper intaglio in *AP* 9.747 (and attributed to "Plato"): "It is hard to see why the imitator should have changed the number in so servile a copy unless both are describing real stones, one of which actually had seven cows, the other five." Although impossible to prove which of the two epigrams preceded which, the game seems to have laid in the *mise-en-abîme* of replications: just as one epigram turns Myron's heifer into five cows, the other in turn transforms it into seven.

¹³³ At the same time, we should not miss the bucolic metaphor: Artemidorus of Tarsus' image of cow-poems "penned" into a carefully crafted anthology (*AP* 9.205) is here metamorphosed into a herd of cows confined within a single, minutely laboured, miniaturist work of art (itself represented by means of this single poem).

it, impressing (and inverting) its representation into soft and malleable wax.¹³⁴ Confined in a golden pen they may be, but these cows are nevertheless set to go on reproducing with each and every subsequent reproductive act—whether literal (by using the seal), or poetic (by responding to this self-confessed *sphragis*—reopening its fictitious claim of closure).¹³⁵ Replicating replications of a replication, at once visual and textual, the poem expressly invites us to replicate at will. Given the epigrammatic responses to the poem that follow—whether mimicking its structure but adding a few distinctive variations (*AP* 9.747), or shrinking its four-line attempt at miniaturisation into just one couplet (*AP* 9.750)—we can be sure that subsequent poets rose to the challenge. Rather than opening or closing a collection, in short, this *sphragis*, like Myron’s original act of reproduction, knows no end. The poetics of simulation, themselves simulated, become the subject of still further simulation.¹³⁶

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¹³⁴For an excellent introduction to the replicative games of Greek seal-stones, and their relation to Greek theories of replication more generally, see Platt 2006. Seal impressions, as Platt rightly demonstrates, provide the standard Greek and Latin image for discussing the mental “impressions” of *phantasia*: epigrams on seals consequently occasion thought about ecphrastic “impressioning” at large.

¹³⁵On the metapoetic significance of the *sphragis*, descending especially from Theognis, *IEG* 19–26, see Pratt 1995.

¹³⁶This article is based on a paper within a panel on “Naturalism and its discontents in Graeco-Roman art and text,” co-organised with Verity Platt, held at the Annual Meeting of the American Philological Society in Chicago, January 2008. The thoughtful questions of one audience participant proved particularly fruitful in subsequently developing my ideas: not knowing her identity, I am unable to acknowledge her by name. Subsequent research was carried out during the tenure of a generous Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship in Berlin and Munich. Sincere thanks to Luigi Bravi, Jaś Elsner, Luca Giuliani, Simon Goldhill, John Henderson, Ivana Petrovic, and Verity Platt for their advice; I am also grateful to *AJP*’s two anonymous referees who commented on the original submission with great diligence, care, and generosity.

APPENDIX: ATTRIBUTION OF MYRON'S COW
EPIGRAMS IN THE *PALATINE ANTHOLOGY*

Poem (<i>AP</i>)	Attribution	Discussion
9.713	Anon.	
9.714	Anon.	
9.715	[Anacreon]	Page 1981, 146, s.v. "Anacreon" 17
9.716	[Anacreon]	Page 1981, 146, s.v. "Anacreon" 18
9.717	Euenus	Gow and Page 1968, 2.294, s.v. Euenus 8
9.718	Euenus	Gow and Page 1968, 2.294, s.v. Euenus 9
9.719	Leonidas	Gow and Page 1965, 2.387, s.v. Leonidas of Tarentum 88
9.720	Antipater of Sidon	Gow and Page 1965, 2.63–64, s.v. Antipater of Sidon 36
9.721	Antipater of Sidon	Gow and Page 1965, 2.64, s.v. Antipater of Sidon 37
9.721A	Anon.	
9.722	Antipater of Sidon	Gow and Page 1965, 2.64, s.v. Antipater of Sidon 38
9.723	Antipater of Sidon	Gow and Page 1965, 2.64, s.v. Antipater of Sidon 39
9.724	Antipater of Sidon	Gow and Page 1965, 2.65, s.v. Antipater of Sidon 40
9.725	Anon.	
9.726	Anon.	
9.727	Anon.	
9.728	Antipater	Gow and Page 1968, 2.86, s.v. Antipater of Thessalonica 84
9.729	Anon.	
9.730	Demetrius of Bithynia	Page 1981, 37, s.v. "Demetrius of Bithynia" 1
9.731	Anon.	
9.732	Marcus Argentarius	Gow and Page 1968, 2.185, s.v. Argentarius 36
9.733	Anon.	
9.734	Dioscorides	
9.735	Anon.	
9.736	Anon.	
9.737	Anon.	
9.738	Julian, Prefect of Egypt	
9.739	Julian, Prefect of Egypt	

Poem(AP)	Attribution	Discussion
9.740	Geminus	Gow and Page 1968, 2.297, s.v. Geminus 5
9.741	Anon.	
9.742	[Philip of Macedon]	Gow and Page 1968, 2.371, s.v. Philip 79
9.793	Julian, Prefect of Egypt	
9.794	Julian, Prefect of Egypt	
9.795	Julian, Prefect of Egypt	
9.796	Julian, Prefect of Egypt	
9.797	Julian, Prefect of Egypt	
9.798	Julian, Prefect of Egypt	

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